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Bella Herson

Tamara – tells her story

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This book is dedicated to those Brazilians,

Whose kindness and understanding

Helped the protagonist of this story,

And so many others, return to human dignity.

Chapter I: " The transport."

How hot and stuffy it was! After hours and hours of traveling and the monotonous noises of the wheels of the train, the groaning of the sick and wounded stopped.

It seemed that the tiredness has finally won and sleep relieved the terrible agonies of the day before.

Through a small opening, between two timber boards of the wagon wall, very near me , entered a fresh and clean breeze.

The air was precious. How good it was to inhale the pure air before somebody sick or strange had exhaled it.

My arms were getting stiff from the affort of carrying my little daughter Marina for so many hours. Not to wake her up I kept her close to me in the same position. In this lethargy, between half sleep and constant watchfulness, the hours seemed never to end.

The aspirin started to show some result, the quick and interrupted breathing of the child, now had its normal rhythm. Was it a recuperation or just an improvement preceding the end ?

I felt exhausted. We knew that we were irremediably lost. It was only a question of hours and we would all be dead.

The child started to breath more calmly. I stretched out my legs between my husband and our son, arranged the girl over me and in this way, leaning near one another, resigned and stunned we fell asleep.

After all, we four were still together. The boy, feeling the protective arm of his father, slept calmly.

Poor boy , was going to discover very soon that in front of a German, not even the infinite love of a father could protect him.

* * *

I felt quite rested, when the creaks of the train wheels woke us up. Only the girl continued asleep. Worried, as I was with her health, I took her pulse. She was alive. A wave of hope and quite a feeling of happiness took over me. Perhaps she will survive, perhaps all of us will save ourselves?

Who knows ? I got optimistic again.

* * *

The train stopped.

We could hear the terrible noises of the German boots and their unmistakable shouts:

" Alles aussteigen !!! Raaauus !!! Raauus !!! (everybody down !)
Out !! Out !!)

We could hear the creak of the wagon door when it opened next to us, and afterwards crying of children, shouts of adults, spankings.

At this moment, I decided, I don't know how and why and with what courage, to hide myself with the baby in the wagon. Not to leave the wagon and disobey the German orders.

I whispered my idea into Boris' ear, explaining that there was nothing to lose by it. If it is true that the train is stopped in a forest, I would

leave the wagon later. "You Boris take care of the boy and if it will be possible separate yourself with the boy from the transport. Run away with him, do everything to live. If one day this war will come to an end, send notice to our German governess Kuskova."- I said.

There was no time to think. Boris accepted the idea.

The wagon was big. In times of peace it served for the transport of cattle. Now loaded as it was with human bodies, even the threats of the Germans were unable to unload it quickly. The one's who were near the door hesitated to go out. The new unknown frightened everybody, because we did not believe, despite the German's promises "that we are being taken to a working camp where we would get plenty of food."

Despite the terrible trip, lying one over the other, sitting on our suitcases and knapsacks, without space for any movement, knowing that some died during the trip and that there were two dead in the wagon next to ours; going out of this hell, meant another step toward death.

In this confusion, when my husband was preparing in the wagon the place for the girl and me, I took care of the half asleep boy. I dressed him in a warm overcoat, put a bottle of water in his pocket, kissed and embraced him in a long hug.

" Have courage , my boy, we will meet one day "- I told him.

The poor kid was half asleep and did not realize that this was a farewell.

It was a dark night. The Germans lit little lanterns and blended with their lights the eyes of the human mass, red as they were from crying and tiredness.

We embraced each other, kissed each other and I don't know how, I did not cry. Perhaps because, in that moment when I saw the tears of Boris,

tears I have never seen before, I felt that as the idea to stay behind was mine , I had to show strength. Not crying would make our farewell easier, I thought.

Meanwhile, when everybody was busy with himself, nobody remarked that I remained laying with the girl on the wagon floor. Boris covered me with a black coat, masking the best way possible my hiding place.

Laying on the side, with my face turnedto the wall, I could see from under the coat the shadows of my husband and son on the wall of the wagon when they moved away.

I saw when they jumped from the wagon. Borris carried the boy in his arms. My dear shadows ! All my life, all my loves turned to shadows. Now, even the shadows disappeared.

It got still darker in the wagon. The Germans were busy with pushing and spanking ; only their shouts could be heard:

-" Verfluchtes Luder ! Saubande ! Frauen dort du bläde Kuh! "

(Cursed whores, pestilence's, women there, you crazy cow)

It was then clesr that they were separating men from women and children. Being so, we wouldn't be together now anyhow. I was glad to have remained in the wagon. My only worry in this moment was to avoid the child's awakening and crying. My arms fell asleep, but I couldn't move.

Suddenly ! I saw reflections of a light on the wagon wall ! My heart stopped beating. The rays of the lantern light passed over me without stopping and continued to search the wagon.

Soon afterwards I heard steps going away. I could breath freely! I hadn't been seen!

It seems incredible that at this moment what I most desired was that the transport would distance itself from the wagon as quickly as possible; I had to change my position, I couldn't bear any more.

The shouts of the Germans could be heard from afar:

-"Marsch ! Marsch, vorwärtz, schneller, schneller ! (March, March !! ahead ! quicker, quicker !)

Till the echo of the steps and shouts died away.

Chapter II) In the wagon .

Only than I started to worry where the train was stopped. On a free ground? In a forest? Or in the concentration camp itself?!

In the ghetto it was said that the trains stopped only inside the Concentration Camp and there the men were separated from the women and children and all were later killed.

By the silence around us I imagined that we could be anywhere but not inside a Concentration Camp, where even at night would be heard some noise.

I tried carefully to change my position without awakening the girl. If she would cry now everything would be lost and we both could be shot.

I rose myself a bit and saw that the wagon door remained open. The entering air was fresh and pure. There was so much space around me !

I heard some shots from faraway. Even from far they made me get goose skin. I embraced strongly my little girl, the only link that remained

from my family. The girl didn't even moan when I changed position. Her little head had fallen aside as if dislocated from her body. She was breathing well. Her little chest was rising and falling in a normal rhythm.

" And my poor Dudi, my little son"- I thought - Is he still with his father?

I didn't know what to worry about first. We had divided, our tasks. I had to bring mine to a right term, leaving to my husband the care of Dudi.(David)

My first problem to solve now would be to discover where the train had stopped. I decided to have a look. I arranged the child on a cushion and crawled to the door. I couldn't contain a smile of satisfaction! The train was stopped in a plain forest. There was no station to be seen.

Who knows, perhaps Boris was able to hide himself under a bush, taking advantage of an opportunity. There was still some hope. I could trust Boris. He would know when to choose the right moment to act.

The girl was recovering. Her sleep now was quiet and calm; this gave me courage.

I then started to worry about the passing time. It was already one o'clock in the morning. The train could suddenly start going and perhaps, wouldn't stop again in such a propitious place from which to escape.

I decided to take with me the most necessary things; dress on me as much as possible and leave the train. It was summer time but the evenings were cool.

I threw out a box of matches to see if there would be any reaction to this slight noise. Nothing moved. I opened a suitcase and dressed all I could ; one sweater over another. Before going down I threw out a tin

with some conserves to see if this louder noise would call somebody's attention. There could be guards near by. Again nothing moved. I decided to leave the wagon. I took off the yellow stars sewn to the blouse and raincoat, which we were obliged to have on; (one star on the side of our chests and the other on the back.) I prepared near the door the knapsack with the child's things, a cover and a cushion. I took the suitcase, which contained tins of the baby's powdered milk, bottles of boiled water, a tiny alcohol heater and dropped it slowly to the floor. Also two bottles of alcohol -- a big treasure for these days.

I checked in the trim of my trousers to see if my jewelry which I had sewn in one day, was still there.

I waited and waited; nothing moved.

I arranged everything near the door, in a way to be able to reach it from the outside. Also the girl together with her cushion.

I tried to go down as noiselessly as possible, avoiding to make any noise. If some danger would appear, I could step on the suitcase, I had put on the floor, and return quickly into the wagon.

Despite my fear , I had the feeling I was doing the right thing. My heart was beating so loud that it seemed possible to be heard from miles away.

I looked around. There was nobody to be seen. From under the wagon I could see what was on the other side of the train. The distance from the train till the first tree was bigger, than on this side. I heard from far a howling of a dog.

I decided to make it quick. I put the knapsack on my back, arranged the child with the cushion on my left arm and with my right hand I lifted the suitcase.

I took the first step. Till the trees I calculated it might be about 15 meters. The first part would be to reach the trees. How heavy my burden was.!

It seemed suddenly to get clearer ! I looked frightened to the sky. It was the moon coming out from behind a cloud. Before it gets out entirely, I have to reach the trees - I reckoned.

Despite the entire load I carried, I succeeded to run. I counted: five, ten, thirteen, eighteen, thirty-five steps !!!

I reached the first trees! Thank God ! The suitcase was almost falling out of my hand.

The sleeping girl moaned. I probably pressed her too hard toward me not to let her fall off my arm. I put her on my right arm, took the suitcase with my left hand and continued going; slower this time, but still counting the steps, to have an idea of my distance from the train. The moon came out entirely from under the cloud ; the mute witness of all my steps, but fortunately , unable to reveal my hideout.

Chapter III) In the forest.

It was good to be in the forest. What a clean pleasant air ! With a sigh of relief I let the suitcase drop to the floor. I kissed my little daughter; she was without fever now.

Never, till now, had I ever passed a night in a forest. Even so, I didn't worry for a moment about the danger of animals, wild beasts or snakes. My only fear was to hear the voice of a German. This fear, which for five years made the blood in my veins freese, helped me to stand the weight of the heavy suitcase, the knapsack and the child, giving me still strength even to run. The small distance, however, was already sufficient to make me sweat. I felt the sweat run down my back and between my breasts.

I got decided to walk more . I wanted to get away from the train at least 300 meters. This meant to take 600 steps more, according to my calculations. From time to time I changed hands. The first hundred steps were easy to make, but I did not manage to complete the other hundred; by one hundred seventy steps, I couldn't go on any more.

I sat down on the floor, assuring myself that the train was already one block away, which seemed to me sufficient. If the forest, I calculated, was small, who knows what dangers might be at its other end?!.

I then decided, to find a bush nearby and make my tent for the night and rest till the next morning.

The silence was complete. It was a beautiful night. The thick and soft moss was covering the ground. The smell of the sweet brush was delicate and penetrating.

From between the clumps of the trees, I could see a clear sky in a navy blue color. The moon was full, splendid, and discreet. If, at least she, could tell me if I was doing the right thing. Only she saw me. The stars in millions seemed with their twinkle to say that they took part in my secret. My hands were so tired that I couldn't move them. With an effort, however, I had to prepare the suitcase as a cradle for the child.

I lay down on the soft moss and when I closed my eyes, the first thing I saw , was my son. Through how many horrors did he pass already till now?!

My dream was that he might still be near his father, hidden in the forest, like me and the girl. Even dozing, I could see in front of me the two big blue eyes of my Dudi, full of fear, shouting the mute question, which had no answer: " Why ! ? "

It was three o' clock in the morning. At five the day would start, and instead of sleeping, I was still thinking what I would do first the next day. I closed my eyes and prayed. I prayed that God should keep them both together.

I felt very tired; I had to have a rest and recuperate my strength for the next unprevisible day.

At the end, I don't know if I was dozing when I awakened with the grumbling of the child. It was half past five. I sat up frightened, trying to understand where I was, what I was doing in this place.

Unfortunately, it did not take me much time to be sure I wasn't dreaming.

The dawn in the forest was beautiful. Beautiful like the awakening of my little doughter; fine again, without fever.

I gave her the porridge I had kept in the thermos bottle and she ate it with an appetite of any other healthy child.

The more it got clearer, the more grew my fear. Till now the darkness seemed to hide me. Now suddenly I felt a sensation, as if the disappearing of the morning smog falling down, would be the last curtain that was hiding me; like if I would be naked without anything to cover.

I had stomach aches from hunger and fear. I tried to eat a piece of bread, but despite the hunger it tasted like dry grass.

What should I do now ?! The forest didn't seem so dense anymore. No houses could be seen, nothing could be heard. Perhaps because it was very early ? What place was this ? What country ? Germany ? Poland ?

Wherever it was, the forest everywhere knew only one language, the one of peace, of tranquillity, of calm, dreamed by so many, during this dreadful war.

As long as nobody bothered me , I decided not to do anything, just stay where I was. I changed the child's diapers, hung them to dry, as there was no water to wash them. Tired as we both were we fell asleep again.

Suddenly I heard voices! Voices of women ! They spoke polish. What a relief ! It was better to be in Poland than in Germany - I thought. They were two strong peasant women, of approximately

thirty five years of age. I saw that they had handkerchiefs on their heads and both carried big baskets. They seemed to be going from one village to an other to the market . They spoke about the harvest of potato's and of the best way to keep them for the winter; domestic worries, which were out of my life for a long, long time already. Only then I realised that I was very near to the path they had to go by. Fortunately, the thick bushes hid me well. I could observe them without being seen. Both seemed to be well fed and they didn't seem afraid. They did not speak of yesterday's transport.

Perhaps they did not know anything about it, or this subject wasn't new and worth talking about anymore.

Immediately after they went by, I moved my suitcase and all my belongings away from the passage, covered it all with branches and remained only with the girl in my arms. So, now if somebody would see me, he couldn't suppose I was a fugitive Jewess. Fortunately, I had "a good appearance" which means, that my features were not Semitic. (I had a short nose and clear eyes.) The girl had beautiful eyes, of a marvelous shade of blue.

Being harvest time, I thought, perhaps they would accept me to work in the field. Of course I could never reveal that I was Jewish. The big majority of the Poles were anti-Semites. Very few of them were sorry for the Jewish fate.

The country people, the peasants were generally illiterate, repeating blindly what they heard about the Jews, all against the Jews, nothing in our favor. The polish mothers threatened their children saying: " If you wont stop crying I will call the Jew and he

will carry you away in a bag ". This way, the polish children drank with their mother's milk the first notions of anti- Semitism.

To resemble a country woman I put a handkerchief on my head and decided to have a little walk with the child on my arm. It was a beautiful day; the dew was covering the earth and the fresh air we breathed, in this atmosphere of peace and greenery, was delicious. I was envying the singing birds who had their nests, their children near by, food at any time, when meanwhile my nest was broken.

It's true that in the ghetto, where we had been for five long years it was very bad. There we used to be cold and hungry, but we had our little room, we worked and in the winter we warmed our children with the heat of our bodies. I remember that during many nights I couldn't fall asleep from hunger. This terrible pain at the bottom of my stomach didn't let me fall asleep and I only succeeded after drinking some water, I tried to imagine the taste of a good dish from before the war.

The hunger, the bad nutrition undermined our health. Many died of typhus or tuberculosis. Being together, we manageded not to lose hope and for us Jews, hope was the best nutrition.

The four of us lived, in a room, just under the roof of an old building of four floors. Near the window, the roof was much lower, obliging Boris to bent when he wanted to stay or look through the window. Boris is tall, has blue eyes.
He could easily be taken for an Aryan of the purest "Herrenrasse" (a superior race.)

From our window we could see the bridge that was passing over the Zgierska Street in the Litzmannstadt- Ghetto. This wooden

bridge, only for Jews, connected both sides of the Zgierska street. The Jews were forbidden to use the street. The side walk reserved for them was isolated with an iron wire and guarded uninterruptedly by German soldiers. The civilian Germans went along the Zgierska street by tramway or by car. The Jews in the ghetto could be on the street only till 8 o'clock. The bridge could be crossed after 8 o' clock only with a special license. Boris being an engineer, worked till later and had that license and many times, I was waiting for him, looking at the bridge through the window. From far I could recognize the noise of his steps. How was I longing to hear them now ! ! ! How everything would be easier if he would be by my side !

So, dreaming with open eyes, I had walked quite a bit, when, suddenly, I heard voices of men who were near by. When I heard that they were speaking German I was horrified. They were coming toward me ! There were three, well-nourished and healthy. Even on the sand of the footpath, their steps could be heard, with their threatening military rhythm. My heart stopped beating, used as it was to stop from time to time.

There was no use to hide anymore. It was too late. Without knowing how, I got courage to go ahead. "I would be another polish peasant walking toward the village"- I thought - It was evident that we were near a village or a military German quarter.

The three of them were approaching more and more... perhaps their hands still had spots of Jewish blood on them, after the massacre of yesterday?!

With the child in my arms, they certainly would leave me in peace. My face did not display the sign of my crime, the biggest crime of this war; the crime of being Jewish.

To hide my fear I pretended to make a bunch of some sweet brush.

The three soldiers passed by my side. If my heart had been beating they would certainly have heard it, if they hadn't been so lost in their conversation. They spoke with sorrow about a friend who died in a bombardment, when he went on home leave to Germany.

The relief I felt when they went away was as big as my hatred toward them. How lucky I was to have taken off the yellow stars. It was the first time that I had been so near a German without being spanked or pushed. This incident gave me courage. "If they didn't notice any fear on my face, so characteristic for Jews then, was a sign that I could fulfill my dream, and escape alive " I thought.

I stopped for a while, to recover from the fright. I rested and planned my next steps and how to react in an analog situation. I had never lived in the country or in a village. I knew the peasants from the market before the war. They always gave the impression of being healthy, simple and mistrusting people.

- "What part should I play ? What identities adopt? Who Am I? From what town do I come ? What will I answer when they will ask questions ?! _

What about if I would say that I was caught by the Germans together with my sister, for work in Germany ?

I succeeded to escape from the transport, went to my sister's house where my girl was left and now, of course, I have to hide myself. My documents were with the Germans."- Was this story believable?! Was it also common here that people did escape from transports?
I will ask them to hide me for a few days in exchange for my work.- I thought.

It was harvest time and there were never too many hands to work. Especially now , with the lack of men, who were in the English or Russian army, or prisoners of war or in working camps in Germany or just dead or disappeared. So thinking and debating alone, I was walking, having in my pocket a piece of bread, some diapers and the bottle for the child. The suitcase was left at the place where I was "camping" at night, covered with branches.

Now, I only needed somebody, who would want me and believe me. The war was coming to an end. Perhaps even the peasants knew it and this would make them more understanding ?

In the ghetto we listened to the B.B.C. even knowing that if somebody would be caught doing it, he would certainly be deported or killed. There didn't pass one single day, without our listening to the news, and lately, being such good news, it was a real nectar for us.

It was October 1944. The Germans were losing on all fronts. The Russians were advancing slowly. There were rumors of a new secret German weapon. The Germans were still sure of themselves. They believed blindly that Hitler would not fail them . The Alien army was advancing and the Germans suffered many losses. Von Paulus became a prisoner of the Russians, together with his whole army.

If the peasants didn't know all this, I could, intrigue them with this news at night. As all of them were illiterate, perhaps could I teach the children how to read and write. Or perhaps they needed help to make some conserves for the coming winter.

Discussing with myself all possible problems I would have to face, I had walked a good peace of the road. The girl awakened. I let her walk to rest my tired arms a bit.

How pale she was, my little poor one. Her big eyes were still bigger, with a deeper blue. The black, long whimpers threw shadows on her thin, tiny face. However, she was well. If we would have only one week of peace she would recover.

- " Tata ? Dudi-" She asked.

" Dudi will come soon"_ I answered her.

Marina looked behind, as though she could see her brother and father at the corner of the road.

I was the whole time thinking of my missing dear ones, but at this moment I had to find a place, where I could spend a night with my child. If we wouldn't succeed, I thought, we would go back to our suitcase in the forest , which transformed itself to a place to go.

I continued on my way, eager to arrive at some house, and at the same time frightened not to be welcome. Whom would I meet first ? A man ? A woman ? I preferred to have to deal with a man. Even the worst that he would be, it would somehow be easier for me. I had always more luck with men than with women. What kind of men could be at home now ? An old, crippled, or a sick one ? Also, it was already five years, since I have seen"the free world" . I have forgotten how to live in freedom, without the terrible iron fences.

That's why, I decided to ask little and answer only the most necessary and in the most vague possible way.

When I arrived to the edge of the forest , I stopped, undecided, alarmed. In front of me was a huge field of wheat, already cut and put together in bundles. From far I saw a house, a typical polish peasant house, with its roof made of straw. Some smoke was coming out from the chimney. They are probably making coffee-I thought. A cup of hot coffee, what a dream!

What should I do now ? Hide myself behind a copse and observe the house better, or take courage and go right up to it ?

Needing some time, I sat down a bit and pretended to smooth out the dress of the baby. I decided to go on and pretend to be an Aryan woman. Walking slowly , I tried to get used to the idea not to be afraid and not to be a Jewess. I repeated to myself: " I ran away from the train , which carried women for work in Germany... for the time being I can not get in touch with my relatives... could you let me stay for a few days, till I find a way to let somebody know about me, and find out if the Germans are still looking for me... I can work hard just for a place to sleep "...

REpeating this to myself, I came near the house. I knocked at the half open door and a dog appeared. As strange as it seemed, he did not bark?! He flapped his tail, and smelt the girl; perhaps did he feel that we were not worth even to bark at, but his amicable reception gave me courage.

Chapter IV: In the peasant's house.

"God be blessed" (Szczesc Boze)- I said in a low voice, at the door.

There appeared a woman of 45 or 48 years of age. Her face looked very tired. She had red eyes and seemed sick.

" God be blessed" (szczesc Boze) she answered in a tired voice.

_ "Excuse me"-- I said- "I arrived here, running away from the Germans . I escaped from the transport. I can not return to my town, because the Germans are looking after me. Would it be possible to stay here for just a few days, till I could get in touch with my relatives? I know how to do many things: to cook, to iron and if necessary I could help in the fields."

_ " Sit down"- the woman said- " My husband is coming soon. He has to decide. We are many, and the house is small, but it's wartime. If my husband will agree, you can stay. I am sick and need somebody to help me"-

- " What do you have? What hurt's you?" - I asked the good woman.

- " I have stomach pains and many other things. I stay in bed morethan on my feet"-- she answered.

1. Only than I remembered about my name I couldn't anymore be Tamara Lipszyc ! Tamara Lipszyc had to cease to exist ! What would I call myself ?! What's my name !? Why didn't I think of it before ?!
2. I would call myself ... Eugenia. That's it.! Eugenia- a good Aryan name. Eugenia What? ! Eugenia Pieczarek. So, Tamara Lipszyc, nolens- volens, became Eugenia Pieczarek. “If

her husband had to decide" - I thought - I could feel encouraged at the moment. I was not ugly, and men sympathized with me.

" What can I do till your husband arrives? You are sick. I am not used to doing nothing. ~~You~~ tell me what to do and you can lay down. " - I said

" Than, let's go to the stove"- she said.

The house was not divided into rooms. It was one big area, where everything was inside.

In the middle was a big wooden table, with two wooden benches on each side. There were three beds, a stove in one corner with iron heavy pots on it. The pots were enameled. inside The dishes were of clay. In the same room they also did the washing. Near the stove was a big wooden tin full of laundry to be washed. The stove was made of bricks.

The coffee on the stove made of chicory and burnt wheat, smelled good. On the table, was some home made bread, big and round, which for me seemed to be the most splendid cake.

This woman, certainly, doesn't know what hunger is. If she ~~would~~, she would ~~have~~ offered me a ~~drop~~ of coffee and a piece of that marvelous bread. Fortunately, I knew how to control myself, despite the hunger burning in my stomach. As I was swallowing my saliva, I could hear in my ears the polish saying: " nie dla psa kielbasa" (The salami is not for a dog)

I started to wash the pile of dirty dishes. I decided to win the sympathy of this woman making myself useful. I asked her again to sit or ~~lay~~ down and tell me what had to be done the most urgently and take advantage of my presence here. When she suggested to

make a potato soup, I immediately put myself to work. When I was peeling the potatoes, she told me that her name was Maria, she had four children, two boys and two girls and that her older son was killed by the Germans, in reprisal for the death of two German soldiers who had been killed in the village near by.

To frighten the population, they shot twenty young boys, on the the village square, obliging all the inhabitants watch the "Spectacle".

Telling this, the poor woman started to cry and pointed to her stomach saying that an insupportable pain was eating up her stomach.

-" Three years have passed now" - she said-

" Three years I am sick and cannot forget. He was a beautiful boy and was such a good son! He helped us so much. He was going to be 18 years old... ", and she continued crying.

I cried with her. I knew the pain of losing a son. My small Dudi had not completed 8 years. The common pain brought us nearer to each other. The difference was that I could not describe my loss...

Looking at the window, by the light of the sun, donna Maria knew the time and said that it was quite lunch time. The potatoes for the soup were ready, they only had to be seasoned with some bacon and fried flower. Delicious!

My little girl came near me moaning and wanting her bottle. She drank all of it. She was fine again and with a good appetite. I asked the good women where I could put the girl for a nap. She showed me a bed in the corner. A real bed.

The girl who had for days, the suitcase, or my arms, for her cradle, fell asleep immediately.

It seemed that God realy had pity on me. Cheered up, I took the broom, cleaned the floor, arranged the unmade beds, set the table for lunch, because the soup was ready, just waiting for the eaters. When I was cleaning the house, I remarked that the good woman had put two more plates on the table and near each plate a big slice of bread, leaving the rest of the bread in the middle of the table. She did not know anything about rationing of bread or hunger - I thought. For how long didn't we eat at ones will and were constantly hungry?

The absence of my husband and my son, to enjoy this banquette, made a knot in my throat. I controlled myself immediately, remembering that nobody likes sad things and they can not know the truth.

My girl, fragile little doll, continued asleep. She was pale, quite transparent and so pretty, that she resembled an angel more than a human being. Voices could be heard from outside. It was eleven o'clock. My heart started beating strongly. What will be the reaction of Maria's husband ? !

What kind of man is he ? And the children? Will they be malicious? Will they discover that I am Jewish ?

I hid completely behind the stove. I wanted to give time to the woman to explain to her husband, that there were strangers in the house. It was he who entered first; healthy, strong, truncated medium stature, limping on one leg. He had a closed face, but didn't seem to be a bad man, rather a person who gets angry easily.

After him entered a boy of about fourteen years, then a younger one of about eleven or twelve and two girls of ten and sixteen years.

" O, Michal " - called Maria. Here came a woman from Kielce with a child, telling that the Germans are again capturing women to take them to work in Germany. She escaped from the transport and is asking to stay with us for a few days, until she will be able to communicate with her family. I let her stay till your return, to have your decision."

- " You are crazy, woman!" Shouted Michael. - What will we do with a stranger in the house.?! It's dangerous; the end of the war is near. We wont complicate our lives now! Where is she ? "

I gave one step forwards and said: "Good morning, you don't need to get angry at your wife"

Everybody looked at me. I don't know what was showingon my face, but in the angry eyes of Michal there were shining little lights of sympathy or pity.

He felt ashamed of his rudeness and said : " I am hungry. Let's eat first, later we will decide"

" Thank you"- I answered.

The children looked at me with sympathy and went to see my daughter.

- "What a beauty ! She seems to be a doll ! Is she alive ? ! " they exclaimed.

My Marina awakened, opened her big blue eyes and the tiny woman that she was , answered to the gallantries with a most coquettish smile.

-" How pretty she is !" - they shouted.

Everybody wanted to carry her a bit. She was delighted with so many adorers and I felt happy. Happy not to have been recognized and not repelled. And for being able to sit at a table and eat.

All of them put their hands together, repeating after their father the prayer. I did the same, looking afraid at my little one, wondering what her reaction would be, if it couldn't betray us. She had never seen us pray.

The polish people were always very religious and the war made them, like everybody, still more so.

But, oh God !! The small one put together her little hands, pretending to pray, looked around at the other children.

This was a real miracle ! She never saw somebody pray like this and now she did it, like guided by an invisible hand.

I swallowed my tears of emotion in my tight throat . Everybody ate in silence. I ate my soup slowly, using her also to hide my emotion, and to prolong our stay in this refuge. The bigger girl Stasia was feeding my girl and the child ate everything, even the bread.

The lunch finished, a silence of expectation seemed to have fallen over the table. The children looked at their father, with fear, but seemed decided to be on our side.

Stasia , the oldest, gave a push with her elbow at the smaller one, Marysia, probably the youngest, and the father's favorite. And she began talking, half trembling:

-" Let them stay Papi. I will take care of the baby. Let them stay at least for a few days. They could sleep in the cellar"

The father continued silent. The girls, feeling that they were winning, started to talk together: " Let, father, let ! Please." My small one shouted also: " let father , let "- thinking it was a play. Listening to this feeble voice saying

" let, Father, let ", the rude peasant could not resist anymore and said with a large smile: "O.K. they can stay "

I couldn't resist the nervous tension anymore, and ran behind the stove and started to cry. To control myself I started to wash the dishes when, meanwhile, they all continued at the table, talking about me. It looked like a conspiracy. After a while Michal called me and said:

" ~~Donna~~ Eugenia, we have to talk to you and combine some thing's". It took me time to remember that I was Eugenia, but my slowness to come ~~nearer~~ him could be taken as shyness.

Michal said: - " We have decided to tell the neighbors that you are our relative and have come to visit us. Do you have any document , some register? "-

-" No, I don't have anything"- I answered- " I threw everything away because I was on the German's list of the transport. I was afraid to be discovered. Of my things I have only a suitcase that I left hidden in the forest. I can go and fetch it when it will get dark. There are the child's things in it, a cover and a cushion."-

" Antek " - said the father to the bigger boy - "go to the parish and ask the priest Paulo when I can talk to him.

Don't tell the priest anything about Eugenia, do you hear?

The first part was won. I wanted to kiss them all. The house seemed to me very cozy. The sympathy to each other seemed mutual now.

From this moment on I had to be an Aryan and I had to get used to this idea.

_ "I am Eugenia Pieczarek" _ I repeated and repeated alone to myself.

Antek ran immediately to the priest. Stasia and Marysia wanted to go out with the small one and show her to the neighbors. I thought more prudent to wait till Michal talked first to the priest about me and later to see what would be the most indicated to do next. It was cool outside and the girl had fever yesterday, it was better for her to stay in the house. The younger girl Marysia remained with the girl and the bigger Stasia returned with the father to the fieldwork.

I succeeded to persuade ~~Donna~~ Maria to lay down and have a rest, and take advantage of my help. She told me what was necessary to be done and went to bed. After I finished washing dishes and cleaning the kitchen, I scrubbed the table, the benches and the cement floor. Afterwards I went with Marysia to see the cellar. It was a worm room, where they kept everything for the winter, like potatoes, conserves, sour cabbage, beetroots, cheese, etc. Through a tiny window entered a bit of light, sufficient to be able to distinguish the things in the room. I had to prepare a place to sleep before the night came. Even a straw-bed was sufficient. In the afternoon, my Marina slept on the girl's bed, whilst I washed the laundry. I asked Marysia to hang the washed things outside on a cord, as I preferred not to be seen by the neighbors.

It was time to prepare dinner. ~~Donna~~ Maria asked me to make a soup of carrots, potatoes, corn, celery and parsley-- my favorite polish " krupnik " . I couldn't avoid thinking again about my two

beloved ones; had they gotten something to eat? I really couldn't demand more from my luck; my girl was fine again, we had a place to sleep and something to eat. I should feel grateful and thank God for everything.

Perhaps somebody had taken them in like it happened to me.

Antek returned saying that the priest would be in the parish at night and that Michal could come in the evening and talk to him. During the rest of the day I couldn't think of anything else, than what would be the priest's opinion.

It was autumn, my favorite season of the year and the most pretty in Poland. The marvelous afternoons; the earth wrapped in a golden cover of yellow brown and red leaves. The whole nature gave the impression of being satiated and satisfied, as a person feels after a big meal: lazy, pleased, and ready for an afternoon siesta.

The sunset was especially beautiful during my first day of freedom, after quite five long years, behind barbed iron of wire fences. Despite the freedom I felt like a bird which had flown away from it's cage; undecided, insecure, afraid to fly...

Noises could be heard. The " team" was coming for dinner. Delicious soup was served at the table in the same iron pot in which it was cooked.

I arranged my dress a bit, combed my hair, but did not take off my handkerchief to resemble more a peasant woman. Michal looked at me with sympathy. The dinner finished, Michal and the boys filled some bags with straw and carried them to the cellar for me.

It was quite dark when we went out to fetch my suitcase in the forest. The twilight was long and beautiful. The bluish night shadows were mixed with the last red rays of the sun.

It wasn't hard to find the suitcase, the companion of my escape from the Germans , the dear tie which linked me to my husband, since it was he who helped me pack it and close it. In it was kept, like a treasure, the little bit, left from our past.

With the suitcase, my little daughter and the strawbed, the cellar was transformed to my corner, where I could cry, look at our things, remember and dream.

The same evening, Michal went to talk to the priest about me. Untill his return, I prepared the beds for the night. Only now I saw the large double - bed, because it was hidden behind a curtain. ~~Donna~~ Maria was telling me stories of her life. I could hardly listen to her, worried as I was about what the priest would advise Michal to do with me. The girls and the boys were already asleep.

I decided to lay down thinking that when Michal would come back and find me asleep, even if the priest would have advised him to get rid of me, he certainly would let me stay, at least this one night. Very tired as I was, and still waiting the man's return, I discussed my apprehension with ~~Donna~~ Maria, telling her how worried and sorry I was, that Michal had to go to sleep so late because of me.

_ " You don't need to worry " - said ~~Donna~~ Maria. - "~~His~~ He being so late is a good sign. The parish is far away and when Michal is pleased he likes to have a drink with his friends. The priest promised probably to arrange documents for you. Go to sleep and don't worry".

" Thank- you" - I answered - "God will pay you for all this goodness"

I went to sleep, embracing and kissing the good woman first.

Quieter now from her explanation, with my stomach in peace and a tired body, I thought it better to have a good night sleep and recover my ~~forces~~ strength. Who could foresee what was awaiting me the next day ?

The air in the cellar was damp with the aroma of the onions, potatoes and the sour cabbage. The girls had arranged everything the best way possible: they lined the suitcase with straw bags for Marina, who looked like a doll in a box ~~in it~~. For me they made a bed of straw bags. A rug of a ~~clearer~~ softer fabric served for a sheet.

As I was accustemed to do, I prepared milk for the child in the thermos bottle, to be ready in case of a transport or necessity to run away. Exhausted I lay down, eager to sleep and rest. Despite the extreme tiredness, the emotions and the afflictions of the day, didn't let me sleep.

When I hardly closed my eyes, I saw my husband and my son in the most desperate situations in front of me.

As I couldn't help them, I wanted to go out, run, call them, embrace them. All this being impossible, the only thing I could do was to cry without consolation. "If I could - I thought remain in this house till my presence could be explained to the neighbors, I could go back to the line of the train and perhaps there I could find some trace or sign of their destiny.

Through the tiny window of the cellar, the moon could be seen. Now not anymore the unfortunate spy, but my confident and fellow companion. If she could tell me all she saw, she certainly would know where my dear ones were. The big silent ball... discreet... if she could talk...

I don't know how long I was deliberating with myself. I didn't hear when Michal returned. It was still dawn when I awakened. It was too early to get up. I heard a cock crowing from faraway . When it got a bit clearer I could see how many webs of spiders were just over my head. For the time to pass I started to look at the things in the suitcase. I could have forgotten some yellow star still sewn on some dress, or an evident sign of one, taken off at the last moment. It felt good to look over my things: photos, stockings, woolen sweaters, underwear, shoes, some blouses, a ~~quite~~ fairly new pyjama. In the Knapp-sack were diapers and Marina's things. I thought it better to hide the photos, the golden watch (I had a simple one on my wrist) a ring and my wedding ring. As the floor was of hard beaten earth, covered with bricks, I took out one brick and hid all my treasures ~~under~~ beneath it and disguised the place with some potatoes. Here it would stay until I could find a ~~secure~~ safer place for it - I decided.

I was waiting impatiently for the child's awakening. I gave her the bottle, changed her diaper and put her into my bed. I packed the suitcase and left it ready. It became a habit to have the suitcase ready, because we knew that the Germans arrested during the night and gave only five minutes to get ready to leave.

I heard steps upstairs. They were awake when I came up. ~~Everybody~~ One was already dressed. The boys went to fetch water. I

started to make the coffee, which had nothing of real coffee. We put in cold water a piece of dry chicory, which could be bought in yellow boxes with the trade mark "Bohms" written on it. When the chicory melted and the boiling water got dark , than was added some spoonful's of burned and ground wheat, let it boil a bit and the coffee was ready. The smell was imitating coffee and with milk, it tasted very good.

In the ghetto we used to save the soaked wheat that remained on the bottom of the pot (we called it "fussy "). To that "Fussy" we added raw grated potatoes, a bit of flour, saccharine and bicarbonate. This mixture in a closed pan we boiled in an other pan of water. The result was a kind of pudding that we ate instead of bread. It was good to cheat the hunger we felt.

After breakfast, Michal and the bigger girl went to milk the two cows. In Poland, a peasant, who possessed two cows was considered well of; and during the war, he was considered rich.

The bigger girl, Stasia, came back from the stable carrying two full buckets of fresh milk . I couldn't resist a big smile of satisfaction. For how long since I had seen this?!

Michal perceived my euphoria and offered me a glass of the milk, just as it was, hot, a few minutes ago milked from the cow. I didn't want to accept it, but Michal insisted. I sipped a bit of it and thought to leave the rest for my little Marina, but he told me to drink all, giving me another cup of fresh milk for Marina, saying:

" For the child there will be always fresh milk as long as the Germans will let us have the cows. "

Imagine my happiness! Pure milk, with no limit, for my daughter ! "The tins of powder milk in my suitcase would remain for an emergency." - I thought.

When Marina awoke, I gave her milk mixed with some water. I was afraid that pure milk could harm her.

Michal told me later that the Germans confiscated from him one cow last winter and since then he had to deliver to the military quarters 5 liter's of milk a day. This work was done every day by Antek. Michal's mentioning the Germans brought me back to my concern that a simple glass of milk had made me forget " my problem if I would be able to remain here." I still couldn't bring myself to ask Michal what the priest advised him to do; I was afraid that my dream to stay here through the winter would vanish.
Michal, like he had already felt my worry, said that the priest Paul promised to arrange documents for me, but this could take some time. When he will get them, he will let us know immediately. He advised that I shouldn't go far away from the house, I shouldn't work in the fields; not to let me be seen by the Germans. About the neighbors I didn't need to worry, because for them I am a distant cousin, who came to stay with the family through the winter.
Of course, immediately there started to appear some curious neighbors. They always found some pretext to come: one to borrow an onion, the other some salt or to buy some milk. Especially one of them was more unpleasant than the others. She had small, penetrating eyes, and a thin strident voice. I don't know why this woman frightened me. Jonczykowa was her name. She was a widow and a mother of two already married daughters. She was living with

one of her daughters and always had something unpleasant to say about her son in law, about her daughters or neighbors. The first day she wanted to know everything about me: where I came from, how it was, when it was, where was my husband, of what fabric was my skirt made, what's my name, my profession etc., etc. I was under an avalanche of questions. To escape from ~~that real~~ this interrogatory, I took the washed linen and went out to put it to dry on the cords. She came out after me. I came back and started to scrub the wooden table. She continued by my side. I tried with the noise of the scrubbing brush to overshadow her voice, but even so she continued asking questions. Finally, she decided to leave, promising to be back tomorrow.

What did this woman want? Perhaps she just wanted to gossip. Perhaps her unpleasant curiosity was part of her nature, which I felt ~~insupportable~~ unbearable. Perhaps because of my constant fear to be recognized.

One day, when we were alone at home, myself and ~~Donna~~ Maria, she told me that she had another son, the oldest, twenty seven years old. He was with the polish guerrilla (so called fifth column) living somewhere in the woods. From time to time, at night, he comes home to see his family, to take some food, something to wear and everything else he needed. His name was Jan.

His visits help me to live - said ~~Donna~~ Maria - but he is coming less and less lately. I had to tell you this, because you will meet him and I trust you. The neighbors don 't know about his visits. For them he is in Russia, or in the Russian army. He decided to revenge the death of his shot brother and entered the guerrilla. He is handsome

and good looking and the girls of the village are crazy about him. He is intelligent, likes to study and doesn't look at all like a peasant He is our great pride. Unfortunately, now, the weather doesn't help. The clear nights are treacherous. He appears only on rainy nights, by a cloudy sky, during nights without a moon. I am sure, you will like him If the priest Paul wont be able to arrange documents for you, we will ask Jan. With the guerrillas he can arrange everything.-

_ Thank you - I said and to give her some courage in return, I added: - This wether can not last long. It will change. Soon the will rains come and with them your dear Jan. Go to bed nowand sleep well.-

The days were easy to pass; I worked, talked and was busy, but the nights turned to hours of torment. I couldn't fall asleep, imagining thousand of things; turning from one side to the other. The nights were long, with no end. I missed the strong arms of my husband, which used to give me so much confidence.

As I couldn't fall asleep, I got out of bed and watched the moon through the tiny window, as if I could possibly see in her the reflection of my two dear ones.

Perhaps a book, to read would give me some distraction and help me fall asleep. But here thre was nothing to read. I only managed to dose a bit, when the cocks started to crow and than I slept a short sleep, disturbed by the fear of getting up too late. That's why during the day I looked tired with swollen eyes. Even so I tried to work as much as possible, in order to get tired physically and be able to sleep. Iasked even to ask Michal to let me work in the field, but he thought it more prudent to wait till the priest would give some news.

The work in the fields , before winter was ~~quite~~ almost done. There remained only the collection of the dry hay.

Slowly I got to know all about the house and it's surroundings. Apart from the military quarters, the Germans had in the neighborhood a Concentration Camp, about which there were told horrible things.

Michal, when he touched this subject, never entered into details and asked not to comment anything about it in the presence of ~~Donna~~ Maria. He was afraid they would catch Jan. It was known that the guerrillas once caught, if they were not executed on the spot , they were brought to these camps.

Every evening, when returning from the meeting with his friends, Michael brought news.

There were many Germans passing through the village. They were evidently loosing the war, but still believed in the secret weapon of the Führer, who continued through the radio to encourage his soldiers and promissed a miraculous weapon.

It was the beginning of November 1944. The Russians continued advancing slowly. The aliens occupied already the north of France. Every night, Michal was saying, there were passing near the village, trains full of Russian prisoners, civilians and Jews. Transport trains fully packed, were passing by at high speed. From the news , it could be seen that the end of the war was coming, but how many innocent people would still die before it would be over!

The priest told Michal, that perhaps on next Sunday he would be able to bring my documents. I was anxiously waiting for this day

to come.

On Sunday everybody thought it better for me to stay home instead of going to the church and the excuse toward the neighbors would be, that I had to stay with my child. I had to be patient.

The house was now shining clean. Everything was in order in it's place; the washing done, the children in clean, ironed dresses. Donna Maria seemed to be a bit happier, perhaps because she had with whom to share her sorrows.

On Saturday there was an other visit of Jonczykova. Of course she wanted to know if I will come next day to the church.

_ I don't know yet - I told her - the girl was very sick only a few days ago and if I wont have with whom to leave her, I wont be able to go to mass, even though I am anxious to go.

_ What a shame - she said- I wanted you to meet my daughter. She never misses a mass on Sunday.-

_ Then - I said - there will certainly be other occasions to meet her.

Nobody seemed to like this awful women but although nobody paid attention to her she did not mind, and was just talking non stop. When after a small pause, her chit-chat seemed to be exhousted, she said:

_ Do you know the latest news? Yesterday, a Jew jumped off the train and the Germans killed him immediately-and then continued maliciously:

_ I am not sorry for the Jews. Many of them drank Christian blood and now has come the time for them to pay for their sins.-

I became frozen. I was controling myself in order not to show to this women what I thought and felt. I even suspected that she did it to observe my reaction. If she would know that I am Jewish!

Is it possible that she suspected something?

My only weapon against this kind of insinuation was to smile.

There past more days and nights, very much alike and solitary. The weather continued good. During the night, the clear moon, enormous in all her splendor, looked on the earth, which many millions of stars helped to illuminate. With such a beauty, how many escapes and hideouts did she betray?!.

I remembered how she was my only company in the forest and how I only moved, when she was hiding under a cloud.

It was really a long time that the sky continued clear, without clouds. These were beautiful nights for lovers, walks in time of peace, but terribly treacherous in time of war.

~~Donna~~ Maria was very worried with the lack of clouds and was blaming the moon for the long absence of Jan.

_ When he will come- she said - I will have to call you anyway. We will have to go down to the cellar and bring the two cheeses which we ~~used to~~ keep there for Jan.

V) A visit of Jan-the guerrilla.

Finally during the night the weather changed. It got cold and windy. Nobody went to sleep before midnight. The next day was rainy and cloudy, which brought me new worries. "Where ~~had been~~ my two dear ones during this cold?!".

~~Donna~~ Maria, since the early morning was saying, that she was feeling Jan's arrival and started to prepare things. Very early in the morning we boiled eggs and fried some meat, before the neighbors would get up and smell it. If they would, they would certainly think that they were dreaming, because very seldom we ate even a chicken from our own yard.

Michal brought from a special hiding place in the cellar, a big Italian dry salami. Donna Maria with the help of the two daughters prepared the pastry for bread which went into the oven in the early afternoon. When the night was finally falling and everything was ready, donna Maria had to take some calming tea: of boiled water with herbs.

_ I wanted so much to see him - she was saying -but I feel that each visit exposes him to danger. -

Luckily, the houses of the neighbors were fairly distant. Not one of them knew about this visits.

Even so, Jan took precautions; he never entered directly into the house. He used to enter first the wooden toilet in the house yard.

There he waited for some time, than he imitated the barking of a dog and only when somebody from the house gave him a sign, he dared enter the house.
In he early evening, when I was going down to put the girl to sleep, Michal came down after me and told me the following:

_ I don't know how to start, but I wanted to atell you two things. -

First, don't tell anybody about Jan's visits. And second:

I hope you wont be angry if Jan would find that your presence in our house is dangerous for us.-

You don't need to worry about all this - I answered him - First of all I also had, or perhaps still have a son and understand very well what you feel; second : I know that I am at your mercy. I haven't got anywhere to go but when it will be necessary I will leave and will be grateful just the same for everything you did for me. It will be left to Gods will. -

Michal put his hand on my shoulder and said, as he looked to the floor:

_ Don't be sad. I will never abandon you. Our Jan is a good fellow, with a golden heart. If he will find that your staying with us represents a danger, he will take care of you and take you with him to the forest, to the guerrillas. There are many families with them.-

- Thank you - I murmured touched with so much kindness.

The big emotion, the expectation to see Jan took away everybody's appetite.

These simple people believed so much in their own intuition, that I was worried what would happen if Jan would not arrive that night. Afraid of this I started to persuade Donna Maria, that perhaps he would come only tomorrow or some other day.

_ No - said Donna Maria - this can not be. He always curses the beautiful clear nights and waits for rain. If he wont come to-day, it is because something happened to him. I don't even want to think of it ! -

_ But it doesn't need to be a disaster - I answered - he could have got another order which could be only done during a rainy night.

It was eleven o' clock; the time when Jan used to arrive. I thought it better to go down and not to frighten him with a stranger

immediately after his entrance. I preferred to leave them alone at ease to decide together about my destiny.

I went down to the cellar. The smell of the sour cabbage was very strong, but the place was cozy and warm and my little doll was sleeping peacefully. My little love, who made this tiny corner my home, where even the rats were my friends and the smell of the tin of cabbage was comforting.

Here I could allow myself the luxury to change into my sleeping gown. Before, in the ghetto, how many nights we did sleep to be ready to leave at any moment!.

Already lying down, when normally were starting the tormenting hours of affliction and sad thoughts, I heard the barking of a dog. I became alerted. Somebody opened a door. I heard oppressed steps followed by closing of a door, It was Jan ! Donna Maria was right ! I was glad for her, for them. I was curious to meet him. Everybody said that he was so nice and kind. At the same time I was afraid of his decision.

There passed an hour or perhaps more. Somebody came near my door, scratching it in the combined way.

The cellar was dark when I opened the door. I rolled myself with the cover. At the door appeared a tall man followed by Michal. When I lighted the small oil lamp I could see a really good looking man and that Jan was very handsome. I also noticed that he liked me, I could feel it by the tiny waves felt by mutual sympathy between two people of opposite sex.

I felt that I had conquered a friend.

I invited him to sit down on my bed, the only place available to

sit, but Jan preferred to watch my sleeping little daughter, kissing her tiny hands.

How pretty she is! - he said, looking at me and, I am sure, if Michal wouldn't be there he would have added :" looking like her mother". But his look said everything.

Jan seemed to be a fair man; I did not need to be afraid of anything depending on him. He had a nice soft voice and even talking softly, I could hear that the timber of his voice was grave. Immediately he started to calm me, saying that it was better to avoid any contact with the outside world, as long as I hadn't got the documents in order. If there would appear any danger, his brothers had a way to let him know. A bit later, he told me that they had got a combined place, in a certain tree, where they left messages and in this way they communicated during his long absences.

I was touched with his confidence he felt toward me and happy About my unnecessary fright of Jan's decision. I did not want to cry, but the emotion was too strong.

_ Don't cry - said Jan-I promise you that you wont need to cry anymore. -

Dear Jan ! What did he know about my reasons to cry, being so disposed to help me.

Michal took the two big cheeses and salamis. Both said good-by and went. I could heare their steps moving away from the house yard. I liked Jan. He really did not look like a peasant, a son of such simple people and they really had good reason to be very proud of him.

We all slept little that night. Therfore, next day everybody

got up later. Donna Maria, after so much commotion stayed in bed the whole day, crying and praying in a low voice.

Poor thing! It was really a pity to see the anguish of this woman. Nothing could overcome my impatience and desire to go to the rails of the train and to search for some sign, or some message.

One day, finally, through the tiny window of the cellar I saw a priest arriving. It is probably the priest Paulo - I thought. It was an old man and seemed to be a good person.

Stasia received him at the door with my girl on her arm.

What a doll ! - he exclaimed. - Where is your mother? - he asked little Marina.

And , oh , irony of life ! My little daughter started calling:

- Donna Eugenia ! Donna Eugenia! You have visitors! -

Quickly I made a braid of my hair, covered my head with a handkerchief, smoothed out my dress and a piece of a broken mirror showed me a reflection of a beautiful woman.

I wanted the priest to like me. I needed sympathy and friends.

I got nervous thinking of what he might say, but fortunately it was much easier than I had imagined: - the priest was also a man.

But what he said left me disappointed. He asked me to be patient, because it was not easy to arrange documents. It seemed that he had just come to know me, to see how I looked. He did not stay long, said good-by and left only the sympathy of his look.

His look of "sympathy" made me think : " If they would discover the truth, would they all still be so good to me ?

Certainly not.

The polish people were very anti - Semitic and hated the Jews.

They hated from envy, for having learned to hate, hated for pure hate, blaming the Jews for all misfortunes which happened to them. We were the "chosen people" to be hated.

I was afraid to wake up and this would be the day when they would discover everything. I was afraid of the sleepless nights. Frightened to be betrayed, to be recognized. Fear, always fear.

The autumn this year was especially beautiful; the floor was covered with multicolored leaves, the sky seemed eternally blue, The sun warming and shining, going down the horizon every day surrounded with purple and splendor.

This beauty of the nature seemed to be contrasting with the ugliness of human life. It seemed that with this, contrast it wanted to show that life could be beautiful. The human beings did not have disposition and animation to look at the beauty of nature.

A cataract of badness, ugly and cruel, was hiding from human eyes, all that was beautiful and dear.

The winter was approching with large and frightening steps. And with it bringing the fear of the terrible cold. November was coming to an end, and everybody knew that the last few days were a special gift from God this year. The winter was coming with its implacable cold. In Poland the winter was terrible. The temperature dropped sometimes to thirty degree below zero.

Not to have warm clothes and a warm place to stay and sleep meant death by freesing. Alias, by the way a beautiful, painless death; you fall asleep never to wake up again.

I do remember cases from before the war, when cargo drivers fell asleep

during the night and were found next day dead and frozen hard.
The European winter was beautiful in times of peace, when we left home well nourished, warmed up and well dressed. The dry cold did not bother us and sliding on the ice, or playing war with snow balls, we even started to sweat.
The impeccable whiteness of the snow everywhere was dazzling. Everything covered with snow , looked like a soft foam, done by small, tiny stars, all of different sizes and forms, "done so perfectly by the angels in the sky and thrown down for the good children on the earth"- as told by the tales.
During the day, when the sun was worming up the roofs, the snow was melting and running down the roofs in the form of water, but when it was getting colder with the nightfall, this running water was becoming frozen in the air, forming icy pointy bobs of different sizes and thickness.
The children loved to pull them down passing by.
These bobs embellished the beautiful landscape, which looked some times like a scene of a fairy tale, immobilized by a magic touch.
Like by a magic touch all this beauty disappears, when a foot with rotten shoes steps on the soft foam and the melting snow enters through the holes of the shoes, freezing the feet and the cold is penetrating to the badly nourished and badly dressed body's soul.
Every winter day is a long suffering. The weeks seem to be interminable and with a big relief are torn away the calendar pages of December and January, because February even still cold, means already the end of winter and the beginning of spring.
This way for the fugitivess was added one more fear, one more

enemy to so many fears and enemies; the fear of the cold.

In this house I didn't need to worry in this respect, Michal, helped by his sons, had prepared, under a cover, behind the house a big reserve of dry wood.

During wintertime, when it was not snowing and a new snow did not cover his footsteps , Jan did not appear. The snow was dangerous, because it left deep footsteps, which could be followed by the Germans.

Anyhow, before the real winter came, Donna Maria expected at least one more visit by her beloved Jan.

I was getting more and more nervous. The priest Paulo came to pay a visit again without bringing anything for me. Did he suspect? something? Being unsure I avoided his look and during his visit I went to the cellar and only returned when he was leaving.

This visit left me still more unsure. I felt that the priest Paulo wanted to tell me something, perhaps something unpleasant that's why I did not give him a chance to be alone with me. Something told me it was better not to talk to him. I got very worried.

The coming news were frightening. On one side the Russians and the allies were pressing tighter the circle around the Germans and on the other side the deportations and killings of the hostages was more and more frequent.

Who was always the best informed about all these horrors was our "beloved" Jonczykowa. She was saying that the Germans used the Jews of the Concentration Camps to make medical experiments.

That they killed many political hostages byinjecting air in their veins. Never did this woman open her mouth to say something pleasant; she only knew how to talk about horrors.

Stasia brought from the secret place a small note from Jan, which was immediately thrown into the fire.

He promised to come soon. Donna Maria's afflictions started again. One Tuesday morning she got up and said:

_ He is coming to-day _ and there was nothing which could persuade her otherwise. It was like she would have received a message and started immediately the preparations. She baked bread, boiled eggs, prepared cheeses and salamis. Whilst working she did not know if she should be glad or worried with her son's arrival; she knew he was exposed to danger each time he came. I also got worried, because I saw that not only was he putting himself in danger, but how very much harm these visits did to his mother's health. I was even thinking if I should tell him this.

Like the other time, Jan arrived a bit before midnight, when I was already in the cellar. I heard him come. After a while, somebody was a knocking at my door. I opened it and it was Jan, but this time alone. Jan was handsome and very vigorous. He was wearing a coat of wild leather, lined with goat fur. He said : " good evening, how are you?" and sat down on the bed, kissed the little girl's hand and said : -

_ It's a shame that I can not see her awake, they say she has the most beautiful eyes - and turning to me he asked : - and you, how are you? A bit calmer now? I brought you something and hope that it will help you to be less worried. - and saying this he took out of his pocket some papers and said :

_ These are your future personal documents. The owner of them died in the forest during delivery. There is only your photograf missing. Photograph. Everything else was already changed and corresponds with your appearance. -

Dear Jan, he thought of everything! Having seen me only once, he remembered the color of my eyes, my hair. He even guessed my height, despite he had seen me lying and covered, in the dark cellar by the light of a tiny oil lamp.

I got very touched by his evident interest. I wanted to thank him with a hearty hug, but dominated myself and limited to say:

_ God bless you, Jan. I am immensely grateful and I hope to be able one day to reattribute your kindness._

He looked at me and said:

_ You are very pretty, Eugenia, dangerously pretty for a wartime.

_ Thank you - I said, and to remind him that I was married I added:

_ My husband was always saying the same -

Jan did not try to disguise the sadness, which these words meant to him, but, even so, caressed my hair saying:

_ Keep calm. Now with the documents, you can take a risk to go out, but don't abuse. -

He kissed both my hands and got up to leave. I stopped him for a while. He sat down again, hopeful to hear something more personal on his respect and I could see his disappointment when I said:

_ Your visits, Jan, bring us all a lot of joy, but I feel obliged to tell you how very harmful they are to your mother's health -

_ And for you ? - he asked - without taking away his look of me – do I mean something?_

_ For me you are a very dear person and it's always a pleasure to see you, but like your mother I would like that you don't risk yourself so much -

_ I am very careful - he said.

_ I wanted to tell you something else - I said. The priest Paulo was here. I thought he came to bring me the documents he had promised, but it seemed he came just to look at me and observe me. I am somehow scared since his visit _

_ The priest Paulo is a good person - Jan said. But if you would feel some danger, leave your girl here and come at night to the forest. One of ours is always on watch. Light a match every fifteen minutes. It is our conventional sign to call for help. Somebody will appear to take you to a safe place. In case you would have to leave this place during daytime, Stasia knows how to leave a message in a combined place_ .

Before leaving, quite running away from what he would like to have added more, he said :

_ Don't worry, you can always count on me _ and left

I followed the noise of his steps on the yard. I felt that Jan had fallen in love with me. This was dangerous, very dangerous.

That night I could not sleep. I saw Jan's eyes devouring me with love and alsough this should have flattered me, it worried me instead .

Next day I showed everybody the documents which, Jan had succeeded to arrange for me.

_ Even of Eugenia he thought! _ exclaimed ~~Donna~~ Maria

_ He thought of you _ I said _ because he knew the danger for you to have in the house somebody without documents. _

Now, there was only my photograph missing on the document and I could go out without apprehension. At last I could get near the train rails, as I was longing to do for so long.

One afternoon, (the afternoons had already been very cold) I decided to go alone to the place, where for the last time I said good-by to my husband and to my son and where for the last time we have been, all four together, a family.

I walked quickly, I did not run not to call too much attention. I crossed the forest, where I pased the first night of my flight. I was anxious to arrive near the line of the train, as if Boris and Dudi would be waiting there for me.

I recognized the place where the train had stopped, but I did not find anything, nobody. I searched the floor all around in the hope to find some familiar object, some note, a message, some sign. I did not find anything.

I was standing there watching the long cold rails; rails of a train which led to an unknown, certainly strange, repulsive place. A shiver run through my body.

I had waited for so long to find some vestige. I was frustrated. One month was gone since that night. A whole month. Thirty nights and thirty days without knowing anything about the destiny of my beloved ones.

Such despair and discouragement took over me that I did not perceive that it was getting dark. Only when the silence was broken by the barking of a dog, that I got out of the torpor and dullness.

I went back “home”. Frightened, and in tears, I embraced my little

daughter, as ~~thogh~~ she could have disappeared during my absence. The small one looked at me astonished. It was good to have at least her in my arms, for my kisses!

On a Wednesday, during lunchtime, the priest Paul arrived. He sat down at the table with us, talked little, but at the end of the meal, he said turning towards me:

_ I am glad, ~~Donna~~ Eugenia, that you have the documents already, ~~even so however~~ I ~~advise~~ you to be very cautious. _

_ Do you think that next Sunday I ~~could~~ go to ~~the~~ mass? _ I asked.

He looked at me surprised. My question disturbed him visibly. It showed that he was suspecting that I was Jewish. I ~~don't know~~ what made him suspicious. Perhaps ~~the~~ intuition? I don't know. But if he suspected, it was a sign, that all others in the village could suspect ~~too.~~

Because of this I decided ~~to go to the~~ church by all means. Everybody knew that Jews ~~were not going~~ to churches. I told ~~Donna~~ Maria of my intentions, telling her that my only apprehension was taking the girl with me in the already cold morning. ~~Donna~~ Maria offered to stay with the child, which made me very happy. I started ~~to~~ count the hours which were ~~still~~ left till Sunday. I had never been in a church to pray. I ~~have~~ been perhaps twice to a wedding in a church before the war.

This time I ~~decided to~~ put myself to the proof on which my and my Daughter's survival were depending.

Chapter VI: The Dominical mass.

It was a rainy Sunday morning, a typical polish November day. A thin and cold rain, mixed with snow was beating on my face. I tied the handkerchief around my head, hiding sufficiently my face, not so much to protect it from the rain and wind, but mostly from the curious looks of the people.

Stasia went with me. At that time, she turned out to be my big companion, a friend for all hours. We entered together the small church. With the cold outside, the interior of the church quite full of people, was pleasantly warm.

I kneeled down near Stasia, hid my head with my hands and prayed. I prayed fervently with my proper words. A profound sobbing wracked my body, as thouggh all my suffering had found a tube of escape and could not be contained anymore. I tried to control myself as much as I could. Dear Stasia hugged me, as if guessing that I would not like anybody to hear my sobbing, she covered me with her shawl.

Despite being a simple country girl, Stasia had a lot of fine feeling and understanding. It was good to have her nearby. I was not the only one who cried. Many others could not contain their tears. At the hour of the homily, which subject on that Sunday, was the catholic faith, the priest Paulo said:

_ "Christ did not want anything else than the well being of the people _ and on the cross he exclaimed:

_ Father, forgive them, because they don't know what they are doing. _ Even betrayed he forgave his enemies. At this time of the war, when so many die innocently, a good catholic, even in this bad times, can always find an occasion to do something good and prove to be a good catholic. There are always occasions to do good to your near one, like Jesus taught. There will come happier days, in which, we will remember these days of mourning. Between the people, here present, few can not mourn the loss of some dear one".

The priest Paul got exalted, as if the crying of the women encouraged him to continue. I did not hear all what he said and only paid attention again when at the end of the sermon he asked everybody to sing the Ave Maria and remember all the missing ones. The strident voices of the women followed him. I only repeated together the final amen, happy that the ceremony had arrived to it's end.

The leaving of the worshipers was slow, but once outside, everybody tried to walk as fast as possible toward their homes. The intense cold did not even encourage gossip. Nevertheless some women came to look at me with curiosity. I hung my head, pushed the handkerchief to cover more my face, like if to protect it from the wind and cold. Finally, arm in arm with Stasia we left the church. Michal, who did not come together with us, joined us now. It was terribly cold, but because of Michal's limping we could not walk faster.

Entering the warm house I thought to myself: " help me God to be able to stay in this place till the end of the war".

Everything seemed too good to last. Knowing that I belong to the eternally wandering people I could not avoid beeing pessimistic.

Even going to the church was only a farce for me, because

to pray I did not miss church, a mesquite or a synagogue, I decided, after this first test, to appear in the church every Sunday.

I passed the test well. The fear to do something different, something wrong, was won. Nobody looked at me too much, "nothing is strange on me" I thought to myself.

The rigorous winter got to be my best ally, because after the mass, nobody stopped for a talk, to ask questions. Everybody wanted to run home as quickly as possible.

Arriving home, it was good to see Donna Maria and my small one, not being used to my prolonged absence, she threw herself on my neck saying:

" Mammy, I love my mammy. My mammy is the most beautiful mammy."

Marina spoke a lot already. The company of other children, the new surroundings, very different than in the ghetto, influenced her development. Ignoring the war, of the constant danger, my daughter was happy, healthy and well nourished.

The nights continued to be my torment. Fears, imaginations, terrible nightmares tormented my mind and did not let me sleep when I needed so much to rest. Only something to read could perhaps bring some peace to my mind.

In the ghetto, we missed everything. Exempt books everything was rationed. The lust for knowledge is one of the characteristics of the Jewish people. Books were given as anniversary gifts and paid for with bread. Bread was the strongest value in the ghetto. And it was not easy to spare a quarter or a half of a loaf of bread. Everyone

received four slices of bread per day and this was, quite always our basic alimentation.

I knew a case, where two sisters decided to eat less bread for a certain time, in order to spare some and buy with it a gift for their brothers birthday: a dictionary of foreign vocabulary, which was his biggest dream. The price of the dictionary was half a loaf of a bread. On the first page of the dictionary one of the sisters wrote:

"Gdy przewrocisz kartki dwie ,
I w spisie slow na litere "D"
Znajdziesz krotkie slowo dom
Wspomnisz ten nasz smutny zycia tom"

Which meant:

When turning over two pages
And between the words of "H"
You will find the short word "home"
You will remember this sad time of our life.

The brother did not know the price of the dictionary and did not arrive to learn the foreign words. He was taken away with a "transport" from the ghetto.

Chapter VII: Another visit of Jan.

IT was Sunday night and snowing a lot. A good occasion for Jan's visit. When, during nights like this the snowing stopped suddenly, the two brothers went out with their small sledge and sliding around

the house they took away the signs of Jan's footsteps.

The intuition of Donna Maria did not fail again. This time Jan arrived early, well before midnight. I was already in my cellar. As the snow did dampen his footsteps, I did not hear when he came and got very frightened when suddenly somebody knocked at my door. I was trembling from cold, emotion and relief when he entered. Seeing my nervousness, before I had time to return to bed, Jan embraced me saying:

_ My God, you are crying, trembling! Are you sick?_

And before I could answer he covered my face with kisses, hugging me in his strong arms. The sensation of support, the warm hug made me cry still more. Jan was silent. he let me cry and put on my shoulders his sheepskin coat. How good it was to be hugged. Calmer I returned to bed. Jan covered me and sat down near me.

_ Forgive me- I said to him. I got frightened when I heard the knocking at my door. I did not hear you arrive. I am not sick, but I am constantly frightened, because I lost my husband and my son and I can not find peace as long as I don't know what happened to them.

_ Perhaps I could help you find them _ Jan said

_ This is very difficult and dangerous, I don't want you to put in risk still more your life. Why did you return so quickly this time?_

_ At home I said that I came to bring good news: _ The Russians are already near Warsaw, but the truth is, that I came to see you I like you very much, Eugenia. _

_ For God's sake, don't say anything more. Jan! You can not fall in love with me. I am married and love my husband. It's dangerous for you to love me! If you really like me, don't come just to see me,

I forbid you to do it._

Only after I stopped talking, I realized that I had used the expression: "I forbid you", like I would have some rights over Jan and tried, uneasily to correct the situation and said:

_ It's your home, Jan, and I have not got the right to forbid here anything, but I beg you, don't come anymore for my sake. _

Jan was silent for a while than all of a sudden, he took my head with his two hands and kissed me on my mouth.

I did not resist, I did not defend myself. A shiver run along my spine. I ~~cor~~responded to his kiss. The nostalgia of a kiss, the long time without being loved, overcame my strength, but, right away I tried to react and said:

_ Jan, help me to be strong. It is not right what we are doing. Promise me that when you will return again, you wont come to see me in the cellar. _

_ I can not promise you this. It is stronger than me. I would not be able to come and not see you. _

_ But I will be sleeping and I wont open the door. _

_ If you will do this I will pretend that I am sick and will stay overnight in the house till I will be able to see you by day time and will leave only on the next evening. And you know how dangerous this can be- he menaced, with a victorious air. _

_ Jan, please, my life is already very complicated. If you will continue to insist, I will have to leave this place. Let me pass at least this winter in peace; only two more months. We are happy here. Marina is very small. If you wont listen to me I will have to ask the priest Paulo to find me another place to stay, and you know very well

how difficult this is. _

Jan embraced me and tried to kiss me again, but I put two fingers on his mouth and said firmly:

_ No Jan, you wont kiss me again. I am married, you are an honest man, you have to understand my attitudes and respect them. _

Jan. got up, looked at me with sadness and confessed:

_ You enchanted me, Eugenia. I can not think of anything else than you

_ I am sorry, I did not wont this. You have to forget me. There are so many nice girls around here. Come less often and this will help you forget me. _

_ You don't understand Eugenia that I have you in front of my eyes day and night and think only of you. This never happened to me before. I am 27 years old, have met many women, but I never felt what I feel now. I know that there is no logic in it, that you are married, a mother of children, but nothing changes my feelings. What can I do? _

Jan, we can be good friends. If you have the occasion to meet my husband, you will certainly like him and will be able to understand that a good friendship is very important in life. Be a good loyal friend to me, help me to be a loyal wife.

Jan got up and kissed my hand. I petted his face. I did not want to hurt him. Jan. kissed again both my hands and said murmuring:

_ Don't cry my friend. You are not alone, I will be always with you and ran out quickly.

I was very worried and did not like the idea for Jan's

coming so often. ~~Dona~~ Maria could get suspicious. Mothers feel those things and she would not approve of it. Because of this I took a decision: during the next visit of Jan, I would wait for him, together with all others and wouldnt give him an opportunity to be alone with me.

Many days passed and Jan did not appear. I missed him.

During the winter, without the work in the fields, there was little work left to do for a peasant. The work of Michal and the boys consisted of feeding the animals, changing the straw on which they slept, milking the two cows, taking away the snow which accumulated in front of the house, to bring wood from the forest and cut it to pieces. They carried the water from the spring which the cold very often transformed to hard blocks of ice. From the left-over milk they made cheese and butter. Even though it seems much, it was little for so many people. And this, for my unhappiness, gave enough time for Michal to follow me with his looks.

I did what I could to hide my femininity. I covered my legs, tightened my breasts, did not take care of my appearance. But a peasant, in his simplicity did not know how to disguise his interests. When I was going down to the cellar he always found a reason to go there too ; he needed to get a cheese, a cabbage or potato'es.

A new danger appeared before me.

Meanwhile my little daughter became two years old and was well nourished and had a good color. Petted by everybody she was the happiest in the house. In her moving innocence, she did not know anything that was happening around her.

The days were calm in this distant village and this

tranquillity frightened me, like a calmness, which anticipates a storm. In the ghetto it was always like this. After a few peaceful days, there came new laws, new orders, persecutions, transportions.

The " transports" in the ghetto were organized in the following way: there was sent to the factory an order from the Germans, demanding a certain number of persons to be deported. The directors fixed on the main entrance door this order and the workers could see when arriving to work if their name was on the list or not. To make the list of names the directors generally chosed the sick workers who did not appear to work. The worker who saw his name on the list had to come to the combined place with his documents and his or her luggage. If he did not appear somebody of his family had to come in his place. If nobody appeared, the police (the Jewish militia) went by night into the house of the missing worker and took from the house the nearest member of the family. These were nights of horror. We could hear crying, shoutings, beggings- never heded.

Many tried through some friends, who knew somebody connected to the directors, ("by protekcja" as it was called), to get his or her name off the list, then somebody else was put on her or his place. The number of persons the Germans demanded had to be fulfilled.
With time the Germans demanded more and more people. "To send them to work somewhere else", was the excuse. Slowly, however, we found out the existence of Concentration Camps.

Nobody, however, wanted to believe in the existence of gas chambers and crematories. For us it seemed rather like fruits of imagination, something impossible to exist in the

full twentieth century. How could the world permit something like this?!
This subject was constantly discussed, and talked about by the population in the ghetto. Terrors were recounted. We could not believe that the world could be so sordid and permit such absurdities.

In the ghetto of Litzmannstadt there never appeared a delegation of the Red Cross. Nobody from outside bothered with the fact that forty thousand Jews lived in the ghetto in subhuman conditions, working the whole day in unheated factories without nutrition. It was in this way that the big German industries recruited workers, sometimes highly specialized, without payment. In the ghetto were many qualified engineers.

I, myself worked in a factory of telephones and lamps for radios. The factory was called " Schwachstrom" and produced for the renowned Telefunken. Sometimes representatives of "Telefunken" visited the factory, they certainly saw how thin and subnurished we were, but they never showed interest. They were only interested in the production.

After a whole day of work in the factory we went to the lines of the cooperative-shops to get the daily ration of bread and of "cohlrabe", which was the main ingredient to our soups. Kohlrabi was a kind of cabbage, which, when boiled was smelling unpleasantly and it's taste was bad too. It was yellow or had a color of a pumpkin. It looked like a pumpkin. Nobody who lived in the ghetto will ever forget the taste and obnoxious smell of "Kohlrabi"
With Kohlrabi we prepared our dinner, the only meal prepared at home. At lunch time, in the factories, each one

got a plate of soup, sometimes with a bit of oatmeal mixed in it, and, of course, with "Kohlrabi", with no fat, no meat.

There were many cases of swellings, especially by men, caused by dismutrition and hunger. Some faces and feet became so swollen by the point of bursting. I don't know why we called them " muçulmanos". These ambulating corpses, changed to real corpses after a few days.

Tuberculosis raged, above other illnesses provoked by subnutrition, especially between youngsters, who seldom reached twenty years of age.

There could be bought bread or something edible on the " Black market", where everything was sold. The bread of the black market came from two sources: or from somebody who just died and who's corpse the family was able to hide for some days, or from the money somebody got from selling some valuables to the Germans, through the fence of the barbed-wire.

Often, people of the ghetto, in extreme need, to save somebody's life, risked talking to the German at the fence, offering him some jewelry they had succeeded to hide, in exchange for some food.If they were lucky to meet the German with still some human solidarity, he brought them to a combined place, at night, something edible. More common, however, were cases, that the German soldier robbed the jewelry, which the Jew was forbidden to posses and menaced to shoot at any sign of protest. Often they shouted, saying later that the Jew tried to run away. What value had a Jewish life ?!

The German guards knew that we were all condemned to death, that we continued in the ghetto because the crematorium ovens could not burn quickly enough so many Jewish corpses, and also because the ghetto gave the Germans a source of unpaid workers, as long as they could work.

Despite all these difficulties we preferred to remain in the ghetto, than to be taken away by the transports. Only when the total liquidation of the ghetto was announced, we resigned to leave. At first we were kept in the factories were we used to work. Later we were brought to the train, packed in trucks and carried to unknown places.

In the Litzmannstadt ghetto (Lódz), after it's liquidation some hundreds of Jews succeeded to survive, living like rats in underground hideouts from August 1944 till January 1945, when they were liberated by the Russian army.

We, ourselves could not have remained with them because we had small children who could cry at most unfortunate moments and put into danger the rest of the hideaways. That's why we had to follow our destiny and entered the train on the 23 of August 1944 and were being carried away to the unknown.

A knocking at the door brought me back to reality. It was the detestable woman-Jonczykowa. She wanted to borrow something. Seeing me knitting stockings for the children

she wanted me to show her how to make the heel part of the stocking.I promised her, when I will be that far , to call her.

Of course she did not come to watch me knitting. Not standing her talking anymore, I went down to the cellar to fetch some potatoes. I took some time to put in order somesthing's there and went up when it was time to prepare the dinner. But the hateful woman was still there.

I peeled the potatoes, set the table, finished the dinner and she continued her conversation. Only when the boys arrived and she saw that nobody paid attention to her talking, she went. This time she did not say anything about Jews.

Christmas was nearing. Despite being in war, there was a festive atmosphere in the air. Michal brought from the forest a small Christmas tree. The girls prepared some effects of colored paper. Dona Maria started baking bisques, a kind of honeybread covered with a sugar frosting. Michal even mentioned to buy a little pig and planned to make of it's intestines some sausages. But all this had to be done in secret, because the little pig had to be bought from the Germans and the neighbors could not know.

As I did not posses anything which I could give them for Christmas, I decided to write for each one a poem beginning with an acrostic.

There were missing only a few days to Christmas. The pork intestines were already transformed into tasty sausages,

it's salted meat was kept in the cellar in a big copper-pot. In the kitchen, a big tin of biscuits was covered with a towel. The Christmas tree was ready, all adorned. The children were happy and excited with the coming festivities and amongst them was my small one.

Outside the snow was falling like small stars and the frost was painting on the windows it's fantasies.

Dona Maria, like on the other occasions, was anxious and nervous expecting the arrival of Jan. We knew that he would not come for Christmas. This would be to dangerous, because if the Germans would suspect something they could certainly come on Christmas Eve, to search and could arrest Jan. So we thought that he would come either before or after Christmas.

The general news which arrived were good. The Germans continued loosing on all fronts. We, as they, for different reasons, were expecting the big promised surprise from the Führer: his "secret weapon".

On Sunday we all went to church, even my small one. Dona Maria lent for her the already short coat of Marisia. The white of the snow blinded our eyes.

During the night it was snowing so much, that Michal with the boys had to take away the big amount of snow, which buried the entrance door.

My girl was radiant to be able to step on the soft snow. From time to time somebody carried her. We arrived to the church early and there were still many empty places. This

was the first beautiful Sunday this winter and it was not so bitter cold outside and what frightened me were the curious looks, questions and gossip the people would make.

I did not take off my head-cover and tried to hide my face with it. After a while I could see that one woman, not far from me, did not stop looking at me each time I turned in her direction. I asked Stasia if she knew her and Stasia told me that she lives, like me, with some relatives on the other side of the village, about two kilometers away from our house. I than observed her more and it seemed to me that something in her face was familiar to me and I somehow had the impression that I don't need to fear her. I felt a strange longing to talk to her but I could not find enough courage to do it and thought that perhaps she would have the initiative to talk to me but the priest started the ceremony of the mass, like all other Sundays and everybody's attention was fixed on the altar. The priest's sermon was, of course, about the nearing Christmas.

As it was not windy this Sunday, nobody was in a hurry to leave the small church. The woman who intrigued me, looked very much at my little daughter, Marina. She even smiled at her and my small one returned her smile and it seemed to me to see a strange expression on her face. She left the church before us and my eyes followed her. After walking for a while she turned around, looked at me again and walked away quicker.

Very intrigued I tried, in vain, to remember from where I knew her.

We all walked home. On the way, the children had a good time playing with snowballs and from time to time changing

hands by pushing the small slide. Happy children's world! Did my small boy belong in it?!

We ate our lunch without bacon, or any other kind of meat, because it was Christmas Eve. We had some eggs and a good soup.

My terrible hunger, from only a few weeks ago was slowly forgotten. It's so easy to get used to good things !

Next day, on Monday, the weather changed. Dona Maria got up saying, again, that Jan would arrive this evening. Since the early morning the preparations started. It was a day full of work. I helped in what I could. The hours passed quickly. At four o'clock it started already to be dark.

I decided to have a rest after dinner and to return from the cellar when I would heare Jan's arrival. I took the child down, put her to sleep and lay down near her. The pleasant warmness of her tiny body made me fall asleep and dream. I had a marvelous dream:

"I saw the woman from the church running on a large and speedy avenue, keeping by her hand my son. Both were running and laughing happily to where I was waiting for them at the end of the avenue with open arms. I embraced and hugged my boy in my arms and felt so happy that the dream seemed to be real. The woman hugged me too and than I saw that her face was the face of my dead older sister and she said:" you see how I took care of him? Was it not nice Dudi? I cried with happiness and felt strange when both asked me why I was crying. But why ? why? They insisted."

I woke up with my own sobs and returned to my sad reality and remembered that I had to go up and see if Jan had already arrived. It was still early. I asked Stasia to call me when he would come and went back to the cellar to fetch the woolen gloves, which Dona Maria had asked me to make for Jan. The gift was hers, but I crocheted them and this was already something.

The weather continued bad. The wind was howling and blowing the snow and the cold. We all were waiting in tension. About half past eleven I heard silent steps. It was Jan.

I waited a bit to give him time to enjoy his family and after half an hour I went up and saw a beautiful scene: the two smallest, Narysia and Antek were sitting on Jan's knees and all the others were standing around him admiring their hero illuminated by the light of a small petrol lamp. It was moving to see them all radiant and happy.

I made the combined sign not to frighten them and entered the house. Stasia invited me to come nearer which I did with a certain bashfulness. Michal was the first to get up calling me to sit at the table with them. I gave the little package to Dona Maria and went to greet Jan.

He was visibly thinner and. Entering the house I took off the handkerchief from my head because it was full of snow. Jan saw me for the first time with the braids around my head and I could see by his look that he liked it. I went to the kitchen part of the house where Dona Maria was preparing the plate of food for Jan. All looked at him

fondly when he was eating and talking. Each one brought his Christmas gift prepared for him. Dona Maria gave him the gloves, explaining that she had bought the wool(which was a big luxury in wartime)and I had made them.

-I said: "I am sorry Jan, but I could not buy you anything" and before I finished saying it, they all shouted together: "But you made them"

Jan tried on the gloves; they were perfect, like made to measure. Antek gave him a small wooden flute, he had made by himself. Stasiek, the other brother, gave him two handkerchiefs he bought with the money he had earned by delivering the milk. Stasia gave him a shawl, her first crocheted work I had tought her to do. The small Marysia gave him… a chocolate tablet!… this was the biggest surprise of the night! This chocolate tablet had it's story:

"Marysia had got it from a German soldier who passed on a bicycle near the house. The father Michal got very angry with her then because he had forbidden her to accept whatever from strangers when alone on the street. The mother ordered her to divide the chocolate with all her brothers, but when the mother ordered this, Marysia said that she just finished eating it all by herself. Everybody was ungry with her and called her "a selfish egoist". But Marysia did not cry then. Nobody suspected that she had hid the chocolate for so long, to give it now to her big brother."

Jan got very touched when he heard the story. He embraced his little sister, who with only ten years of age was capable of so much." You are a real heroine. How did you manage not to eat it for such a long time." Listen, he

said: " for next Christmas I promise you a whole kilo of chocolate only for yourself. O'kay?
We were all very moved.

Dona Maria was continuously looking at her watch, worried by the danger of Jan's staying in the house, at the same time devouring him with looks of love.
Jan loved his family, which was a wonderful family.

It became midnight. The church bells were ringing and they all sighed simultaneously. Jan had to leave.
He understood why I stayed there together with the family. After the midnight bells he stayed a bit more, then got up, tall and handsome. Hugged his father and mother, the two small ones, shook my hand wishing me a happy Christmas and went, followed by Antek and Stasia who always kept him company till the forest and later cleaned up all possible footsteps in the snow on the way.
Till Christmas there remained only three days. Dona Maria walked around sad and depressed. I could well understand her.

Chapter VIII: The midnight Christmas mass celebration.

The night of the big Christmas mass arrived. Dona Maria not feeling well remained in bed. I did not feel better, but I had to keep up appearances of a good catholic and went to church with Michal and the children.

My little Marina slept with Marysia in one bed in the house.

We dressed up with what ever we could. It was bitterly cold and to get to the church we had two kilometers to walk in the wind and nightly cold. The night, despite the bitter cold, was beautiful. Millions of stars illuminated the sky, enlarging the Via Lactea even more. The reflection of the light of the moon and the stars on the whiteness of the snow, gave the way the light of the day. The snow was shining as though sprinkled with diamonds. Our breath turned to ice around our shawls. We walked quickly to keep warm, even so we were half frozen when we saw the little church from far away.

Because of the war, the civilians were forbidden to walk afterdark. The windows had to be covered so as no light could be seen from outside. But on this Christmas the Germans gave permission to go to the midnight mass by special permission of the prefect's office. Despite this the church was full like on Sundays. A small heater tried to warm up the place, but each newcomer who entered brought with him a new wave of cold.

When we finally sat in our places I saw that the women who intrigued me so much last Sunday was already there and greeted me with a smile. Again I felt a big longing to talk to her.

During the mass everybody cried, each one had his reason to cry in these sad times of war.

At the end of the mass the priest, Paulo, wished that next Christmas everybody could have, at least, the rest of its present family together.

Everything was passing in complete tranquility, when suddenly the doors of the church were opened and eight German soldiers invaded the church. They asked everybody for documents and the allowance to circulate this evening. I trembled from fright and certainly I was not the only one who got frightened.

The soldiers closed the doors and looked over everybody's documents, looking carefully at the photographs on them, comparing with the owner of each one.

The licenses to circulate were given to each family together, the number of persons and then their names were on them. As ours was kept by Michael and was in order, we had no problem. But three persons who did not have the license were put aside. One of them was a middle aged man and a woman with a sixteen years old daughter.

The woman who I thought I knew from somewhere looked at me, not hiding the expression of relief, seeing that we had no problems. As for the three who were put aside, they were taken by the Germans to clear up their situation. We were all scared, imagining what might happen to them. Their relatives cried and the others tried to confort them.

The woman and daughter who did not have documents, were in danger to be sent to a camp or to Germany for

forced labor. The man had documents, but did not have the license to circulate, because he came late from his work and there was no time anymore to fetch the license. Michal told me later that the man was working for the guerillas, like Jan, and he should have been more cautious, because the Germans noted these kind of faults and Christmas was propitious to arrest the suspicious. Michal was right to be worried. The Germans with their sistems of torture were capable of forcing him to betray some companion

We went home almost running. We were all worried about Jan and the danger he was in. We tried to enter the house quietly without waking up Dona Maria, but it was she who opened the door for us, trembling and almost fainting. Jan was in the house! He wanted to attend the midnight mass and, by good luck he decided to enter the house first, and leaving it he saw some German cars going in the direction of the church. He could hide only in the house and wait for a propitious moment to run away.

Conscious of the danger, he looked for a way to escape because it was evident that the Germans knew something and the danger was imminent.

He hid himself behind a wardrobe, where there was a tight hiding place, hardly room for one man. We all sat down on the bed, close to the wardrobe. If somebody would enter unexpectedly he would get the impression that we were talking to Michal, who was relating to the hidden Jan what happened in the church.

From his hiding placeJan informed that he knew the imprisoned man and he was sure that he would be incapable of betraying a friend. The situation, anyhow, was not good. We decided to put out the lights and pretend that we were asleep and that everything was normal. From behind the curtain one of us was watching to see if anybody was coming near the house.

Finally, very tired, I decided to go down to the cellar and try to sleep. I lay down but could not fall asleep the whole night. In the morning I heard steps nearby. I opened the door and saw Stasia coming with a strange woman by her side. I could not believe what I saw: the strange woman was… Jan! In a very good travesty outfit: in Dona Maria's large skirts, a shawl on his shoulders, a handkerchief on his head, he was a perfect figure of a robust country woman.

Jan came to say good by. He did not mind the presence of Stasia, embraced me and whispered into my ear: "think of me" I hugged him too, kissed his cheek, wished him good luck, and above all I asked him to be careful.

On this morning, of big anxiety, I did not leave the family, even for a moment. We prayed as in a choir for Jan's and Stasia's good fortune, praying fervently that they should come safely to their destination.

I knew, that if Jan would succeed to escape this time, he would'nt appear so soon. This was a farewell for a long time and perhaps for ever.

After a few minutes Marysia and Antek went to follow them and observe from a distance if Jan's disguise was not found out by a stranger. Jan could still be seen from far away.

Together with Stasia he would spend the day and night in a hiding place, and then he would continue by himself, and Stasia would return home.

The hiding place would be the house of a forest guard, who was considered a Folksdeutch, a Pole of German descendence, to whom the Germans offered the rights of German citizenship. All accepted this offer, except that some accepted it only to survive the war, being at heart big Polish patriots, which did not prevent them from being big anti-Semites at the same time. The Jews feared them more than the Germans.

The forest guard, where Jan and Stasia were going, was of confidence, despite the suspicion which encircled these people.

Antek and Marysia would follow the sister and brother until the forest guards house, returning home afterwards.

This morning was for everyone a fasting day; nobody was hungry, exept my little daughter.

To get news about the persons arrested yesterday in the church, Michal delivered the milk to the German prefecture by himself in the early morning. One of the relatives of the arrested did not leave for one second the surroundings where they were kept, but did not have any news. He could only say that fortunately there were not heard any crys or shouts and nobody was removed from the building. It was supposed that perhaps the Germans did not want to spoil their own Christmas holiday, or were just investigating.

Finally, about midday, Antek and Marysia returned and related that Stasia and Jan had arrived to the guards house

safely. The most dangerous part of Jan's adventure was over.

On the way, Jan had asked Marysia to wish a happy Christmas to the family and tell them not to worry.

We all embraced and cried with the news and only than we remembered that we were hungry.

The next day, in the early morning, Michal saw how the prisoners were taken by the Germans out of the building to an unknown place, but they did not seem to have been mistreated. We decided not to tell anything about it to Dona Maria, who continued in bed, praying the whole time.

Now we were waiting impatiently for Stasia's return. The following night we slept very little waiting for the morning. We had breakfast very early, as if wanting to hurry up the comming day and with it Stasia's arrival with good news.

Meantime, when we were waiting for Stasia, I prepared lunch, washed the linen, worked hard, trying to fill up the hours which seemed to be without an end.

Michal, not standing to wait anymore, decided to go with the children to meet Stasia.

We were left alone, me and Dona Maria and my small one, but unfortunately not for long, because the obnoxious Jonczykova arrived with her news and despite my signs to be silent, brought the news that the arrested ones in the church were taken away to an unknown destiny.

Dona Maria took the news impassivelyly, of course she had to control herself, and said calmly:

" I think they will free them soon; they only took them to investigate their identity"

" And if they were Jewish? Asked Jonczykowa They say that the arrested mother and doughter are Jewish,"

" It's hard to prove that they are Jewish , only if there would appear a traitor. I doubt if there would be somebody capable of doing it."

" For money everything is possible- answered the bad woman- The Jews pay well for hiding and the others do betray, envying the ones who have the money."

"But the Germans tolerate the denouncers as long as they need them"- I remarked. " Afterwards, they deport and kill them. For instance, in the city where I lived, the denouncers went with the Jews in the same truck and were buried together after being killed by the gases of the motor."

Jonczykowa, after hearing this crossed herself and the expression of fear I saw on her face, filled me with satisfaction.

Dona Maria pretended to sleep. I made a sign to the woman to be silent and in the end she decided to leave.

As soon as the woman left, Dona Maria sat on the bed and after asking what time it was, she said:

" I feel that everything went fine and I have even the impression of hearing voices of the children"

Her intuition was incredible! There did not pass five minutes and the small group was nearing the house and between them was Stasia. The group entered the house enveloped in a wave of cold, ice and happiness.

After many hugs we sat at the table and prayed, thanking God for having saved Jan.

Stasia visibly tired, told us that when they arrived at the forest guard's house, he was not there, but his wife took Jan immediately to a subterranean hiding place where he remained till nightfall.

When the guard returned hours later, he gave a full account of the situation: many people had been arrested during Christmas and that the roads were being watched. To bring Jan to another place he had to borrow documents and a guard outfit from another forest guard. He reported also that the guerillas had dynamited a bridge and the train full of soldiers designated to the Russian front, only escaped by a miracle. This was the reason for the Germans rage.

After lunch, Stasia whispered in my ear, that she wanted to talk to me in the cellar. When I went down, after having washed the dishes, Stasia came delivering me a letter from Jan and commented:

"The Germans wont forgive this sabotage easily. There will certainly be a reprisal. Jan probably wont come before spring. I am telling this only to you, but I myself am scared. Now I will sleep a bit and later I have to meet the priest Paulo and give him a letter from Jan."

Alone in the cellar, I opened Jan's letter and read:

" Dear Eugenia: forgive me for the worries and hours of tension I havecaused. Do not worry. The end is nearing. Think of me. Take care of my family. I don't want it but I love you passionately. Your Jan."

I destroyed the letter. Nobody could see it. It was nice to be loved by somebody, but at the same time I felt a

tranquillity knowing that at least, for some time, Jan would not risk his life.

Chapter IX " The incredible meeting."

The days were passing. The Germans started again to deport waves of women and men to the supposed work in Germany. It was dangerous to leave the house and even in the house we were not secure.

The priest Paulo sent me a message telling me to hide myself the most possible and that's why I seldem went to the dominical mass.

One Sunday, however, after a sleepless night, seeing everybody dressing to go to the church, I felt a deep longing to go too and pray. Pray to whatever God, with my own words, because about my God I had doubts for a long time.

I dressed up my girl in what ever I had and could. The cold was terrible in the morning. The sky still gray showed some clearer places, as if wanting to prevent the passing of the sunrays. The snow was covering everything. The landscape was gray and white. To reproduce it a painter would need to mix black and white paint to get various tunes of gray.

The church was quite empty and fortunately warming up a bit with the arrival of the faithful. Meantime, on the floor were forming small pools of water from the ice brought in with the shoes. It seemed that on this Sunday

everyone was praying with more fervor. Many were crying. I myself was overcome by a wave of such deep sorrow that only with a big effort I could dominate my sobs. My eyes were full of tears and I saw everything like through a fog. So looking down I discovered in front of me two small and thin shin bones, coming out of woollen trousers and two small feet in simple wooden shoes.

I looked again. These trousers were not strange to me and those thin legs resembled the onse of my boy. I looked up slowly, dried my tears and could not believe it! The thin shin bones belonged to a blond boy, resembling from behind those of my son. Also the sweater he was wearing was very familiar, only the boy in it was much taller than my son. Had somebody found this clothes?!…

I did not lose sight of him and decided to talk to him and ask for an explanation. Observing well I saw that his hair was darker than that of my son's and his neck was so thin that it seemed unable to sustain the weight of the head, like a stalk of a long flower.

Asthough hypnotized by my look the boy turned around for a second, intrigued, but indifferent. Nervous as I was, I realized that even if it would be Dudi he could not recognize me in a handkerchief on my head, because he never saw me in one. I took off the cover from my head, but the boy did not turn around anymore.

The mass ended. I went to the door, with Marina on my lap, wanting to see him in front when leaving the church. The boy seemed not to be in a hurry and remained the last to leave. Everybody was going out slowly, but once outside they rolled themselves in the shawls and ran quickly home.

The boy came to the way out, at last. Dried his eyes with the sleeves of his sweater. He was crying and looked ill, but he resembled so much my son, that I automatically touched his shoulder. When he turned around to me I had no doubts anymore: these were the dear blue eyes of my Dudi, with the green little rays in them, now faded by the tears. I called him softly by his name. He turned around immediately, not believing what he was hearing, because for such a long time nobody called him by his real name anymore!

We did not perceive that we were outside the church. The cold was terrible, the wind blowing ice cold, but nothing was capable to freeze or overcome the heat of our emotion. His thin arms which resembled those one of a scarecrow embraced me and a feeble, incredulous voice weeped: "mami" ,"mami".

As all others were in a hurry to escape from the cold and run home, nobody noticed our tragic reunion (?) and Dudi continued repeating: "mami, mami, my mami".

His voice resembled the groaning of a wounded little dog and he held me and Marina with such a strength that we three almost fell to the floor. And so holding to each other we returned back to the empty church. Marina shouted: " Dudi, Dudi, I like Dudi!"

I myself unable to believe what had happened to us, embraced him, afraid to break this dear bundle of bones covered with bluish and frozen skin.

In a most terrible nightmare I would be unable to believe that a child could change so much in only three months!

Embraced we cried together. Dudi was unable to speak. The spasms of sobbing racked his poor body. I took him on my lap. How light he was! Carrying him like this I went to fetch some water which luckily was not frozen. He was swallowing with difficulty. I rocked him in my arms, caressing his poor face, soothing him with kisses. Slowly he got a bit calmer.

"Mami, mami" - repeated his weak voice. "I am not dreaming?! Embrace me Mami, strongly" I dreamed so many times, of this, but always woke up in the same cold bed alone, without you near me and my sadness continued."

"But father, where is father, my boy?" I asked.

I felt that something terrible had happened, because the boy started to cry again and between sobs stammered:

" We don't have a father anymore, ever more. Daddy died. It was terrible, Mami.It was terrible. I have to tell you. You have to listen to me and tell me if it was not my fault."- and started again in spasmotic sobs.

"Don't say anything anymore, my love, I am sure it was not your fault. What ever happened, you certainly were not to blame."

I hugged and kissed him a thousand times. I realized that my little son was not only affected physically. My heart seemed to break with pain and pity. I just knew that I had lost my husband and of my healthy and joyful child I found only his shadow. And only because we were born Jewish, the "chosen people" to suffer.

The boy sitting now on my lap, warmed up with my body, calmed down slowly. Marina caressed him with her tiny hands. The boy closed his eyes and was smiling like in a dream. His thin tired face resembled a dying child.

I wanted to know how and where my dear husband Boris died, but had not the courage to ask. The emotion of our encounter was already too much for the weakened child. I was afraid that remembering again his fathers death, which he certainly witnessed, would be too much for him.

After all what did it matter now?! I knew that I had lost my dear companion, my friend, my big love. There was only the task to save what was left of us: a dear heavy burden of two children, without the support of a father, or who so ever. Surrounded by danger and enemies from all sides.

I did not know what to do , where to start. I was happy to have my son in my arms and did not yet realize the cruel truth to have lost my husband.

Dudi wanted to say something more, but a new wave of sobbing did not let him speak. His thin chest seemed to burst with so much pain he had kept for so long to himself, without having with whom to divide so much suffering.

_ " Now you have your mom, my little son. Don't cry anymore."

Yes, mami, I found you. I still can not believe it.!"

Seeing us cry the little Marina started also to cry. All three of us crying, seemed a bundle of despair and pain.

With my children on my lap, covered with only a thin shawl, I did not see, that a few benches behind us, was seated a woman, also crying; the one who had so much intrigued me.

It was Dudi who saw her first and wanting her to join us called:

" Aunti Eva, aunti Eva! I found my mother! I found my mother! This time it's true! I am not dreaming!."
And turning to me he said:
" Mami, we can make aunt Eva our real aunt. I love her very much. She will be my aunt for ever."
And he continued talking excited:
" She slept with me to warm me up because we had only one cover. She brought food and I was always hungry. She was hungry too, but divided everything with me."

Dudi hugged and kissed his auntie Eva and I, not knowing how to thank enough for so much goodness, hugged her and cried saying: "God will pay you for your deeds, no human being is able to pay for so much and sobbing I continued:
" I realize that you saved my only son's life. God bless you. There does not exist a possibility to repay the greatness of your deed, but I assure you, I will never forget you and will always love you."

Eva explained then:
" Something in your face somehow resembled Dudi. I could not even say now which features of your face. You have to know that his name now is Janeczek"._

_ *I thought also to knew you somehow, but did not remember where from. I wanted to talk to you too but did not find enough* courage *to do it.* _

It was getting late. We did not realize even that lunchtime was over a long time ago. What do we do now?! We had to return to reality!
What to do?! Take Dudi with me ? To Michal's house? And what to tell him? Will he understand?!

Eva thought,that it would be better to continue as it used to be, at least for some time, as nobody had seen us together, till we find another solution.

Dudi looked at us incredulous. After all he had suffered, I would leave him again?! How is it possible to explain to a child meaningthe size of such an absurdity?!
His eyes looked at me incredulous. How could I leave him again.

I did not find the words. Eva spoke for me:

_ Look dear Dudi. In our village they suspect that you are Jewish. I am hiding you. You have no documents. In the village where your mother is nobody knows that she is Jewish. She stays with good people but if they will discover that she is Jewish they will send her away. It is winter time. If she will have to leave where will she go? Lets have some patience until we find a solution. Lets combine a place where you will be able to see your mother everyday. The most important is that your mother is alive and we found her. Isn't it Dudi?"

The boy was confused. He kept back his tears and embraced Eva. And with a hanged head he said sobbing: Good bye mami.

_ It's not a good-bye for a long time. Aunt Eva is right. We will meet tomorrow at the same time near the church in the wood. We will find a solution. Don't cry and think of our meeting tomorrow._

The solution for the moment seemed fine, but so tough to do it.I wanted to put him inside me for ever. Could Dudi understand what was happening? I had to leave him again?! How could I separate from him again!. My dear poor child, how much had he to understand, things not understandable, and why!

It was getting dark. The night was falling. I remembered Stasia, how worried she probably was, and all the others! What will they think?!

In the end I said to Dudi:

_Listen my boy. We have to do like aunt Eva said. Sleep thinking of our meeting again and the time will pass quickly.

We will meet every day. I wont lose you again. Never more. You hear me?!_

Still embraced we left the church. Like I have done so many times in my dreams I dried the tears of the boys sad face and we separated, each one in an opposite direction. Despite the cold we walked slowly. From time to time we turned around to look at each other , till we lost each other from sight.

Halfway home Stasia was already waiting for me terribly worried, asking?

_ For God's sake what happened to you, Eugenia?! I left the church running and did not notice that you were not near us. Many walked in the same direction and I thought that you wanted to be left a bit behind, and only at home I realized that you were not with us. At the beginning I thought that you entered the cellar and I did not see it. After some time I went down to look for you.-

Seeing my swollen eyes and my silence she felt that something very serious must have happened.

I embraced her and said to her, crying, _ don't ask me what happened. I cannot tell you yet. It has nothing to do with your family. Help me to keep a secret for a few days. Tell the people upstairs that I am not feeling well and that I went to bed._

After walking for a while in silence, to change the subject I asked Stasia:

_ Everybody had lunch? Did you wash the dishes?_

-Yes everything is done, only everybody is very worried about you_

_ I am very sorry, but believe me, my being late had a serious reason. One day perhaps soon I will tell you everything. All right?_

We started to walk quickly. Stasia carried the girl. From so much emotion I felt unable to carry her in my arms. So much had happened: the happiness to have found my boy, the sadness to have to leave him again, the pain to have known about the death of my dear husband, the burden of despair, sadness and abandonment I had to stand, seemed to soften my knees. I felt an incredible weakness.

With relief I saw from afar the dear house and in it my place in the cellar. I asked Stasia to take care of the girl and to tell the others that I had a very strong cold. I fell down on my bed and sobbed into my pillow all my despair.

Everything happened at once: I had found my son, become a widow! Everything seemed to me so incredible! What should I do now?! I felt terribly tired. It was too much for only one day. I felt very depressed with no courage to go on living. How could I live without my Boris?!

But, when I closed my eyes and saw in front of me, the eyes full of tears and love of my son, I knew that I had to live, to be strong, to dry my tears and fight alone for the sake of Dudi and Marina.

Stunned, I continued awake for hours till at last I fell asleep and only woke up when I saw Stasia entering the cellar with a plate of hot soup for me.

Dear Stasia. My "thank you" was very little for so much kindness.

Stasia remained there, silent, when I was sipping the soup mixed with tears.

When I finished, Stasia hugged me and said:

_ What ever it is, what ever happened, you can count on me_

_ "Thank you" - was all I was able to say.

It was better to let a night pass, I thought, "sleep over with the problem and leave for the next day the solution" like Boris used to say.

However, to sleep, how?! Remorse plagued me for having left my son for one more night alone, in his debilitated state. How could I?! I imagined having him near me, dreaming of the pleasure of warming up his poor tiny body.

Whilst, me and Marina were eating bread with butter and drinking milk, my poor son was starving on crumbs.

I could not lie in bed anymore and started to go around the cellar like a wounded lioness in a cage.

I decided to speak to Stasia in the early morning, trusting her words:" what ever happened, you can always count on me".

I decided to bring Dudi, somehow, to the cellar, to hide him in my bed and feed him as long as I would be able to do so.

For this I badly needed Stasia's help and complicity.

I started to separate warm things to dress him. I prepared the thermal bottle to be able to keep in it my cafe and milk warm when left for him from my breakfast. I decided to spare all my possible food and feed with it my poor boy.

It was only four o'clock in the morning. Till one o'clock at noon, the time we had combined for our meeting with Dudi and Eva, was still a long time.

I lyed down again and tried to sleep. I closed my eyes and tried to imagine how Borris could have died and what horrible scenes my poor child had seen. These thoughts made still worse my remorse to have left him alone.

" Dudi would stay in the cellar_ I thought_ hidden from everybody, except Stasia. Even with this little bit with which I would be able to feed him, warm him up with my love and affection, would certainly improve his debilitated state."

This idea and decision made me quite happy. If I would be discovered, I thought, I would go away with Dudi and would leave Marina. Everybody in the house loved her and they certainly would not mistreat her. About this I did not need to worry.

Stasia could give a message to Jan that I had decided to come with Dudi,(Janeczek) to the guerillas.

I decided: "this would be the last night when I left my son alone."

I fell asleep and only woke up with the crow of the cock. I waited to hear some noise from upstairs of the house. The minutes were long.

It was still dark when I heard somebody knock lightly on my door. It was Stasia. Dear Stasia who was bringing a cup of hot coffee for me. I was happy to see her. I embraced her with all my love and affection and said:

"You arrived just on time, I have to talk to you. I thought about my problem the whole night. I hope that you will understand me and will help me. "

_" Always" said Stasia- before I started to say something. "How good it is to be young with no experience of ugliness in life"- I thought to myself.

This Stasia's "Always", so spontaneous and generous, gave me the courage to reveal to her all the truth, before somebody could have shown any suspicion.

It took me time to start. It was not easy, but I asked her promptly:" Would you be ready to help me even if you would know that I am Jewish?!"

Poor Stasia! This was to much for her!

After being overtaken by this, she covered her face with both hands and talked to herself:

_ " Oh, my God, my God! How will I be able to help you?! Nobody should ever know that you are Jewish!"_

"Of course not _ I said_ but *listen to me: yesterday I found my son. I would like to hide him here in the cellar,* even if it is only for a few days. In the village where he is they suspect already that he is Jewish. He has no documents. Please do understand,

after I saw him, so *weakened and despaired, my heart does not let me leave him at the mercy of so much badness. He is only eight years old and I don't know for how long he will be able to survive. I think that he survived by a miracle and by the help of Eva the good woman who took him with her. My dear friend, Stasia, I will meet him to-day, at one o'clock, near the church. Do you want to come with me? "*

I showed to her Dudi's photograph and said:

_" when you will see him and compare him with this photograph, taken only four months ago, you will understand my impatience and my despair"

Stasia looked at the picture and said:

_ "He is a beautiful boy, resembles Marina"-

-" Yes -I said_ but to-day he doesn't resemble himself, he is a skeleton of a child. I think that morally he is more sick than physically. He was present at his father's death. I don't know yet how my husband died. I know that I am ungrateful and am asking very much from you all, but the war can not last much longer. I would love to hide him in the cellar only for one week, till he would recuperate a bit. After I would go away."_

Stasia looked at me frightened with tears in her eyes and asked:

_" go away?! where to?!"

_ " I don't know yet I did not have time to think of it rightly. I only know that if there would be some danger for you, or some suspicion I woukd have to leave. Perhaps there will be a possibility to send notice to Jan?

I don't have anybody anymore, only you can help me._

" I will help you_ she said at last with a decided voice, interrupting it by her sobbing _ but for God's sake, don't ever say to anybody that you are Jewish. When it will be necessary I will alert Jan, but not even he can know that you are Jewish. I hope that nobody else will know." _

She looked through the window, worried by the time that had passed, straightened her dress and said:

_ I will wash my face, nobody can see that I cried. I will go upstairs, do everything as I usually do. It's very late. Mother can get suspicious. It will be better that we dont leave the house together. I will follow you from a certain distance._

Stasia went up. I dressed myself and washed my face with a bit of snow and went up after Stasia.

_ How are you? _ asked Dona Maria _ You really look sick. Wouldn't you like to stay in bed for a day? _

_ No, thank you. I could not stand to be alone a whole day-

I cleaned my nose often, to give the impression of having a cold. At lunch time, I excused myself refered to my cold and kept my soup for Dudi. Washed quickly the dishes and went down to the cellar.

I had to go out through the back door of the house and not to be seen by Dona Maria through her front window. I dressed myself with all I could, took a thick sweater for Dudi and left hurrying toward the church. Nobody could see the encounter with my son. Only more one doubt tormented me: " how would Eva be able to come with the boy, at lunch

time, if she works. And I remembered Dudi saying: " that they were eating when Eva was coming back from work in the late afternoon".

It was a freezing day, but there was no wind. During the night it snowed a lot. Everything was white. Even the naked branches of the trees were covered with thick snow. The way I had to take was little used. To go ahead was only possible entering the few traces left by some footsteps somebody had left before. This I tried to do, but even so I often fell into the snow covering my knees. It was a hard painful walk, but I could not be late.

The sun seemed trying to get free of the gray clouds and their weak rays gave a slight happier touch to the landscape.

I was encouraged when I saw from faraway the small tower of the church. This last part of the journey seemed much easier.

From far I saw the two dear images of Eva and Dudi. After they saw me they entered deeper into the forest. Eva probably thought like me , of the danger to be seen by somebody. I followed them at a certain distance at the beginning and only when we were sure that nobody saw us we hugged each other. Dudi did not cry, and was happily smiling.

_ The boy did not sleep the whole night, every few minutes he was asking what time it was _ Eva said.

_ I tried to sleep_ Dudi said , but when I closed my eyes I saw you, I was so happy that I was sorry to sleep. My dear, sweet mamy, How good it is to have you again_ he was saying when in my arms.

Time was passing: and I said to Eva:

" what do you think about the idea to take Dudi with me? *I thought of it the whole night. I explained to her my plan and that I had told about it to one of the daughters of the house, who promised to help me."*_

Eva looked at me frightened.

" *Why did you do it? I thought that you intended to take the boy hidden. Is it not dangerous?!*

_ " She is reliable, I trust her, don't be afraid. I decided to take Dudi and hide him in the cellar, where I sleep. Even if it would have to be only for a few days. I want to feed him, wash him, have him near me. If they or somebody would discover I will run away with him to the guerillas in the forest"_

_" I would do the same _ confessed Eva- lowering her head trying to hide her tears.

"We wont lose each other, Eva. You will certainly go to the mass on Sunday/ wont you?"

_ " Yes . I go to the mass for the same reason you do."_ I understood. Eva was Jewish. It was better that even Dudi should not know. I embraced her and kissed her and said that if she is Dudi's aunt she is my dear, dear sister.

Stasia was arriving. I introduced her to Eva. They knew each other by sight in the church.

-" And this is my Janeczek, the one from the picture I showed to you."_

Dudi a bit ashamed, stretched out his thin hand toward Stasia.

_" Stasia _ I said to Dudi_ is our good friend it is thank's to her that you will be able to stay with me a few days"_

Dudi looked at Stasia and said with a low voice

"Thank you"

It was getting dark and the time was running quickly.

Eva said good by to my son, who embraced her and said to her sobbing:

" This is not a good- by for ever, aunti Eva. I will never forget you."

_ "And I wont you either. We will meet soon"_ she said turning around quickly and hiding her tears and going the opposite way.

Meantime, when Eva was walking away in the opposite direction, we agreed with Stasia, that when we would be getting near the house, we would hide the boy behind the mountain of cut wood and that I would enter the house first to distract Dona Maria and all the others. So they would not suspect anything, and than Stasia would enter the cellar with the boy and close him hidden there. Of course we both were very worried, trying to control ourselves and hopeful that it would work out fine and all three started the difficult walking. The way was tiring and painful, as the snow was sticking to our wooden shoes. From time, to time we had to stop and scratch away the snow from each others shoes. This took time. The cold was freezing and hindering our breathing. The way seemed endless and the time was passing very quickly.

At last we saw from far the house. This gave us courage. My poor weak boy! How he managed to walk and stand this

cold! I was supporting him as much as I could , so did dear Stasia. He pressed his lips and walked heroically.

Getting near we repeated our plan: Stasia had to hide with the boy behind the cut wood. Later thay would enter the cellar, instructing him not to open the door for anynobody and hide by whatever noise.

Meantime I entered the cellar to warm up a bit, clean the shoes from snow, put on the apron, and went up, like nothing had happened and started to peel the potatoes for the dinner soup. Meantime, when the potatoes were boiling I ironed some washed pieces and felt happy to see that nobody had suspected anything.

My little doughter was playing in a corner with the two smaller one's and did not even look up at me when I entered. For some days she had not been sleeping with me in the cellar, but with the smaller girl Marysia. This was very convenient now with Dudi there.

After some time Stasia came up. I was happy to see her. We understood each other by our glances. Everything was O.K. What a relief I felt!

After a while with an understanding look at Stasia I went down to the cellar. When I opened the door with my key I could not see anybody, only when I called softly: "Dudi"!, half frightened, a small figure moved itself under the cover, near the bed.

We hugged each other for a long while. We knew that we could only whisper to each other and only with nobody near by.

My soup which I had kept from luncheon wrapped in a pan, in a hay sack was still warm. Dudy starving hungry ate it

together with a slice of bread which I had kept from my breakfast.

When I watched him eating my heart seemed to grow with satisfaction.

When he finished the soup he dried the plate with the last morsel of bread.

I embraced him and said to him again:

" my dear boy, I have to go up now and do everything like I used to do when you were not here. Nobody can suspect anything. Be very quiet, try to rest and sleep. When you will wake up do not call me. I will only come when I will be able to. I will bring hot water with me and give you a fine bath, o kay my son? "_

"It's alright mami, don't worry. I am so happy that I still can not believe that I am not dreaming."_

I put him to bed the way he was, with everything on and took off only his wooden shoes. Covered him with the cover, kissed his thin little face.

When I left I closed the door with the key and felt happy and at the same time full of fright.

When I entered the kitchen and saw that everything was the same way, with no change, this gave me courage and helped me control my emotion.

Like I used to do everyday I peeled the potatoes and the vegetables and like always I put on the fire a big bucket with water for my bath, which I used to take at that time, taking advantage of the last daytime light, when the dinner soup was cooking. At a right moment I said to Stasia that I am going down with the hot water and asked her to watch the soup if it would take me more time than usual.

_" and don't be nervous, its only for a few days" _ I tranquilized her.

_ " At night I will go down to talk to you. We have to combine together many things" _ Stasia said afflicted.

_" It's alright, my dear. The main thing is not to let anybody perceive anything."-

Dona Maria was lying in bed and sleeping or dosing. As she slept badly at night, she tried to recuperate the lost hours of sleep during the day

Chapter X: Lice and boils.

It was a nice afternoon. The children had a good time, sliding down with the sledges from a small elevation, not far away from the house. My small Marina already took part in all children games. There were days when she returned home and did not even look for me, as she was so spoiled and caressed by everybody in the house. She was a lovely child. This was good I thought to myself, when I would be obliged to run away, she wouldn't miss me so much.

The water was getting hot. I went down to the cellar, currying a bucket of hot water and a big basin, like I usually did at that hour.

Dudi was awake lying in bed. It seemed to me that he was looking better, with even a better color. I prepared for him a worm clean pajama,a sweater and woollen stockings. When I was undressing him I saw startled the mass of lice that were infesting all his things and worse than the lice were the boils he had all over his body, especially on his thin legs. From a big one a purulent blood was running out,

sticking to his dirty trousers. I washed him carefully hardly keeping back my tears. On many places of his thin body were scabs of dirt. I saw that it was impossible to clean him up in one time, being afraid to irritate his skin, which could spread the boils. I knew well the danger of the lice in these conditions. I rolled a rug with querosen over his head, because I thought this would kill the lice, the rug I covered with a towel. I changed the bed sheets, dressed him with everything clean and covered him in the bed. My poor boy he was so light and so thankful for everything I did . He did not stop caressing and kissing me and repeating:

" Mami, I still can not believe that I am not dreaming"

_" You are not dreaming, my boy. What happens to us is marvelous. I promise you, my love, that from now on I wont leave you alone, not even for a single day.

Outside the night was falling and in the cellar it was getting completely dark. Through the small window entered little light. Dudi could not look out through the window without getting up on some stool. For the moment it was better this way. It was very cold and after a warm bath the bed was the best place for him.

I had to hurry and go upstairs. I soaked in the still warm water all his dirty things. Even his wooden shoes I rolled in a rug with querosen. This way I declared war on the lice.

Before I left, and felt so sorry to leave him in the dark, I told him:

" My little love, I have to go. I can not behave differently thane I used to, in order that anynobody will

suspect anything different. Stay here quietly, sleep or simply think that in a while I will be back with a delicious plate of hot soup for you and that we will be together a whole night." _

*" All right mami, I will be fine"*_

I covered him well and from under the covers could be seen only the improvised turban of the towel around his head. Dudi did not protest and smiled happily.

I went out hurriedly and closed the door with my key from the outside. When I entered the house I could see that Stasia had already set the table. There was little time for the "crowd" to arrive for dinner. The soup was delicious. There was in it some leftovers of the pork sausages from after Christmas. When I was mixing the soup with the big wooden spoon my thoughts were in the cellar as tho' I was wanting to illuminate the darkness there.

We were already at the 15 th of January. Half of the winter was practically gone. Until it's end there would be only about ten weeks. Very often it was still freezing in March. If I could remain here, for one week or ten days more, I thought to myself, it would be already the end of January and there would be left the month of February and half of March. I felt a cold chill thinking of the moment when I would be obliged to leave this shelter of mine. I knew that this moment was imminent and it would come, but I did not want to think of it.

During the dinner, I started to eat the soup, which was delicious, I started to pretend that I was not hungry and said to Dona Maria: ' I will leave the soup for later, to eat before going to sleep. I wouldn't be able to fall

asleep being hungry. I will take the soup with me to the cellar.

I put the soup in a pan, heated it up and put on top of the cover my slice of bread. So this time I could take food for Dudi without rousing any suspicion.

Dona Maria remarked: " You look sick Eugenia, you should take care of yourself. You probably still have the cold, you don't look well at all."

_ " Yes you are right. I do not feel well. I will go to sleep earlier to night, so tomorrow I will feel better."_

Stasia like always helped to wash the dishes. We arranged that after a while Stasia would come down to the cellar and talk to me. I was in a hurry to go and shorten the darkness and solitude of my boy.

My little Marina was jumping on a bed together with the other children and did not even lift her eyes at me when I left, carrying the hot soup.

When I opened the door of the cellar I saw that Dudi remained the way I had left him. It seemed that he had not moved at all.

"Dudi" I called in a whisper _ "yes mother" - he whispered back.

_" You did not sleep?'

'No"

*"what have you been doing the whole time? "_

_*"I was thinking"* _

"My dear darling, you will have to stay here alone for many hoers, but in compensation we will sleep together whole nights."

_" Do not bother mammi, I am already used to being alone. In aunt Eva's house I was spending whole days alone when

aunt Eva was going to work. She worked far away from home. She was afraid that the boys of the neighborhood could beat me up or betray me to some German . So I preferred to remain alone and not go out to play with them. Auntie Eva fixed a little curtain on the window so I could watch the children play outside and they could not see me from outside, when I was watching them. I was sitting there rolled up in a cover a whole day, eating the piece of bread which auntie Eva had left me. It was much colder there than here, as it was a room under the roof of the house. Auntie Eva was returning in the late afternoon and I waited anxiously for her return. She than cooked a soup and we ate it together. Mami, I love very much aunt Eva and I can not stop thinking of her. I miss her. "_

" Eat your soup now, my darling. One day we will visit aunt Eva and when the war will end we will invite her to live with us."

_ " This will be good, mami"_

I did not light the petrol lamp because I was afraid that the rug soaked in querosen around Dudi's head could catch fire. The darkness gave us more security. I did not want Stasia to know that Dudi had lice. She could arrive now at any moment. As Dudi was already for some time in the dark he got used to it and this did not even prevent him from cleaning the last drops of the soup in the plate with the bread.

*" How delicious this soup is, mami, and the bread ! How tasty! Did you eat it too?"*_

_" Of course I ate it and Marina too. I cooked the soup. You know, Marina eats already alone with the spoon like a

grown up. She asks about you and I tell her;" Dudi will come soon", and she repeats to the other children:
" Dudi will come soon" and as they don't know what she is saying they think that she is just repeating something she does not understand, as she often does. This is good, if not it would be dangerous."_

" My sweet little sister. I thought I would never see her again. She is so pretty, Mami, and I am happy to have found her, even though I can not embrace her yet. "_
" Meantime it's better this way. The day will come when we will be able to be all together. We have to hope. Eat now, my love."

" Mami, when I eat I can not stop thinking of auntie Eva. She divided everything with me, I would like her to eat a bit of this delicious soup. And Marina? Wont she sleep here with us? Where will she sleep?"

" Marina is already asleep in Stasia's bed upstairs in the house. Stasia loves her very much. For now it is better this way. Marina could betray your presence here."_

Dudi did not stop talking. It seemed that he wanted to say everything he kept to himself the whole day long.
"Mami, I need to tell you how pappy died. I know where he is buried. I want to take you there."
"Alright my dear. When you will get a bit stronger, you will tell me everything how it happened"_
" Mami, I think that pappy was still alive when they buried him"_
A cold shudder passed through my whole body.
" When I am alone I always think of it, mami"_
I hugged him and kissed his tiny face and said:

" No, no my darling, you should not think about it this way. Later you will tell *me everything, alright? Now I am waiting for Stasia, she might come in a moment. You do not need to be afraid of her. She is the only person who knows about your presence here. From all others, even from our Marina you have to hide. She is too small to understand. If someone will discover, or even suspect about us, we will have to leave, or perhaps even before this happens. And that's why I want you to rest the most possible, to get strong, because we don't know what hardships are awaiting us."_

I lay down near him, embraced the poor little body, realizing my dream of so many sleepless nights.

A scratch on the door of the cellar made Dudi frightened and he hid automatically under the cover.

"Dudi, it is Stasia. You don't need to be afraid. She came to talk to me."_

I opened the door. Stasia entered rolled in a warm shawl.

" Why don't you light the lamp? It's very dark here and it smells of querosene."_

" I know. By accident I split some querosen on the floor and thought it more prudent not to light a match because the floor could catch fire, I lied to her."_

"Eugenia, I brought you Eugenia two slices of bread with butter "_

"Thank you my dear. God blesses you"_

I was hungry, as I did not have dinner and ate one slice of the bread and hid the other one in the closed tin, where Michal used to keep the cheese and salami for Jan . As the tin had some holes to keep the things inside fresh and for the entrance of some air, the rats used to attack the tin

during the night trying to reach the cheese in it. I kept the bread for Dudi, if he would be hungry.

I did not tell Stasia about Dudi's lice, but asked her for some medication for his boils.

"I need some ictiol pomade, some oxygen water and bandages."

I explained to Stasia what I needed and asked her if she could arrange it for me. I told her that I would pay her with some money I still had or with my ring…

*" The pharmacy is very far away, but perhaps the priest Paulo could arrange it in exchange for some eggs. In the early morning I will see what I can do about it. "*_she answered.

After this, we spoke about the keys to the cellar which Michal, her father had, and used them when he needed something from the cellar.

_ " Lately your father comes down less to the cellar" I said_ "I am taking up everything necessary"

Stasia did not know that I was taking everything up from the cellar, in order not to leave any pretext for Michal to follow me there.

" His keys *are hanging behind the door, near the kitchen. What do you think if we would hide* these keys *and when he would look for them he would think that he forgot to hang them back in their place. At least each time when he would need to go to the cellar, we would gain some time to hide the boy or in the closet outside, or behind the cut wood. Or we could offer to bring up for him what he wanted from here."*_

*" A good idea"- Stasia said"*_ I will immediately take away that keys."_

_" For the moment" -I said _ don't say yet anything to Jan. let's wait till Dudi recuperates a bit. I need to treat his boils. Don't be nervous. Dudi knows about the danger and knows how to behave. The war is ending. The Russians are near Warsaw. They say even that Lodz is free. If we will feel or see any danger nearing we will leave, even without giving notice to Jan. We will go to Eva or to the forest guide. Don't worry. I need only a few days. Help me Stasia, it will be alright, only lets keep calm"_ I tried to convince her, When I myself was not convinced at all that "everything would be alright".

Poor Stasia, she wanted to help but could not hide her fearss. She embraced us and went up to sleep. I was worried too, but I had to be strong for my dear boy's sake.

Chapter XI : The fathers death.

We were left alone and in bed weembraced.

" My dear Mami Eugenia! Only to-day I learned that you are Eugenia."

" It's true. I haven't told you."_

_"Eugenia is not a Jewish name? "

" No, my darling."

" Tamara is a beautiful name. I liked when father was calling you Tamara. When the war will be over won't you prefer to be called Tamara again?"_

"Of course, my son"

After he was quietbfor a few minutes, Dudi returned to the subject which I feared so much and at the same time wanted to know.

_ " Mami, I can not forget father. Outside it is so cold and he is there all-alone in the grave. I would like to embrace him at least only once."_

"Sleep, sleep, my love. We are together and this is already marvellous."_

*" Mami, mami let me tell you. I can not sleep"*_

And so embracing me Dudi was talking:

_" You remember that night when father with me jumped the wagon? It was very dark. I was half asleep and did not know where you had been left. Father told me not to look after you, not to call you, that you were alright.

The Germans ordered us to form a column of five persons in each line. First of all they sent the women and children ahead and afterwards they ordered us to walk. We walked and walked without end. Near us walked a German soldier. I was not afraid of him because father kept the whole time my handvery tightly.

Then, when the soldier was left a bit behind, father whispered to me:

*" Dudi, we will try to run away. We are entering a forest. When I push your hand , you will run with me, stepping lightly to avoid any noise."*_-----

When we were entering the forest and the train was left behind, pappi changed the place with me in the line and was on the outside, nearer the trees and whispered: _ "at the beginning we wont run, we will take some distance from the column and will hide behind a bush." _ and this we did. But the soldier saw us going aside and shouted: Halt! Halt!

Pappi pushed me down to the floor and threw himself over me. I felt a pain in my head, I heard a shot and I only remember that I thought that I was dying. Afterwards I do

not remember what happened. When I awoke it was getting clearer and I saw pappy still lying over me. I tried to wake him up, I thought that he was asleep. I pushed his arm, but he did not wake up. His coat was covering me completely. I looked from under it and saw that we were in the forest alone. I tried to get out from under pappy and saw a big spot of blood on pappy's back and on the floor on his side the earth was soaked with blood. His eyes were half-open. I kissed him and felt that pappy was very cold. I got frightened. I did not know what to do.

Than I remembered that perhaps you still remained in the train, as you in a whisper had said to pappy that you had the intention to do so. But I was afraid that if I would go to the train I would not be able to find the way back to Pappy. So I remembered the story of Jo and Mary you used to tell me and marked the trees with pieces of the white handkerchief I had and reached the train. I entered into all the wagons till I found the one in which we traveled. I recognized it by our basket I saw in it. I looked all over, called you softly, later even louder, then I ran frightened back to the forest and was glad to find pappy. I thought that I had to bring father to the hospital, that he was in big danger. I cried, called pappy to wake up and tell me what I should do, but he did not wake up. Then I remembered the bottle of water you had put into my pocket and I hoped that the water would wake him up. I poured the water into his half open mouth, and on his face and nothing helped. Mami, Mami I was so desperate. I did not know what to do, where to go, where to ask for help. And if a German would appear what would I do?! I was sitting there caressing my pappy and crying.

Dudi's sobbing was shaking his poor body in my arms. I saw in front of me the terrifying scene of my husbands death. He took care of the boy, he saved his life with his own body. The monument of this hero was raised only in my heart, which seemed to burst now from pain and his deed remained indelible in my memory.
My poor Dudi, tired and weak as he was, he insisted to continue. It was perhaps better so, I thought, to let him get rid of this terrible burden and let him continue:

" It was already light when I heard voices. I remained hidden till I heard that it was polish. I was praying and hoping it would be you. I looked out of my hiding place and saw two strange women. I decided to ask them for help. I got up and went to meet them. They looked at me surprised and with admiration. Crying I asked them to help me, saying that my father was lying there wounded. They followed me, looked at pappy and one of them said: "nie zyje" - he is dead. The other one exclaimed alarmed: " zobacz nosi gwiazde, to zyd" - look he wears a star, it's a Jew!
Both took distance from me frightened and wanted to go, but I took the hand of the nicer one and I implored her:
_ " Please help me take my pappy to a hospital, please. I can not carry him alone." I begged crying.
The nicer one was auntie Eva. They both told me to remain there and they would return with some help. I was afraid that they would not return and told them I will go together with you and took again auntie Eva's hand. This time I marked the way with small stones. After we walked a bit, the other woman, called Stefania, said to Eva:

" You are getting into trouble, I wont have anythin to do with it"_

Auntie Eva answered her:

"Let's go back. We will take off the stars from the man and nobody has to know that the he is a Jew. The only thing you have to do is to shut your mouth. The war is coming to an end. The most it can last is over winter. Till spring the boy will remain with me."

"Yes , said the other- till spring we have a long winter"_

We came back near father. I kept firmly auntie Eva's hand and she pressed mine in hers to give me courage. Pappy was still in the same position like we left him. Auntie Eva took off the yellow stars from his back and front. They were soaked with blood and auntie Eva buried them in the earth. She took out everything from his pockets, put it in his knapsack, which was by his side and took it with her. Pappy was left there again alone when we left and I could not stop crying. They both were whispering the whole time for me not to hear and at the end auntie Eva said:

*"From now on you won't say to anybody that you are a Jew. This is finished and your name is not Dudi anymore but Jan, You understand?!"*_

She said it very harshly and energetically ant I started to cry convulsively again. Then she embraced me and whispered into my ear:

_ " Don't cry. I wont abandon you. You will stay with me till we will find your mami. Don't tell anybody anything about your past."_

_Still crying very much, I remember I said to auntie Eva: "Thank you very much" _

The boy was exhausted.

" We will leave the rest for to-morrow, my boy," I said caressing and kissing him.

*" No mami, I have to continue to-day. I feel a big burden and pain here"*_ he said pointing to his chest.

And he continued:

_" By what I heard from their conversation, they intended not to say to anybody that we were Jewish and they wanted to bring some men to bury our pappi. Mami, I could not believe that a pappy could be buried and that I wont have anymore my beloved pappie anymore. How could it be,Mami?!

He stopped for a while sobbing in my arms.

And continued:

"I could not stop sobbing, something seemed wanting to burst inside me. My head started to hurt very much and I vomited. When we arrived finally upstairs to auntie Eva's tiny room, which was under a roof of a house, she gave me some water and a pill and put me to bed, covered me and kissed me promising that nobody would hurt me and that she would be my auntie Eva till we would find you. I thanked her many times and I don't remember when I fell asleep. Aunti Eva told me later that I slept two nights and two days."

*"Now it's enough, my love, I said firmly, to-morrow you will tell me the rest, my darling,"*_ while caressing and kissing his meager and tiny face, he fell asleep.

For me started a long night of sadness and despair. Dudi's story which I feared so much to hear was already told. I became a widow at 27 years of age, with two small children, without a house where to go, persecuted and hounded for an absurd unexisting crime.

I could not fall asleep, seeing again the night of my flight. I was so near Boris when he was dying! I remembered the shooting I had heard, and how I had felt a shiver all over my body. I remembered the two peasant women who passed near where I was hiding, which had certainly been Eva and Stefania. Perhaps only some hundreds of meters away they found Dudi and his dead father. And only the moon saw all this. The same moon I was waiting for to hide under a cloud and to be able to proceed my walking to reach the wood. If this silent moon would have talked that night.!

A big feeling of discouragement took over me. I felt too weak to carry alone such a heavy burden; a burden of two children in a life which with nothing could be compared to other people's lives. I tried to silence my sobbing into the cushion and not to wake up Dudi and only fell asleep, when I saw through the tiny window of the cellar, the first lights of the cominging day.

I felt very tired when the crow of the cock awoke me. Dudi's tiny head was resting on my shoulder, the towel fell off showing his poor hair which was one day curly, blonde and shiny.

I had to get up and wash Dudi's things whichI had left soaking in the water last night. There was not enough water to take awayof the smell of querosen. I could not fetch water outside as long as they were asleep upstairs. The rope of the water pump was very noisy when pulled and it would wake them up. I had to wait. I was already resigned to stay in bed doing nothing, when Dudi woke up. It was good that he woke up early as, my poor boy, would have a whole day long to sleep and stay in bed. He embraced me

tightly repeating again and again:_ "How good that it is true, it's not a dream you being near me, my sweet mami"

The cows in the stable started to low. I heard somebody opening the door upstairs. Michal and Stasia are certainly going to milk the cows, which meant fresh milk for my two children. The thought of it gave me new courage.

I should not think- I decided- I should not worryy about what might come. I had to live from one hour to an other and enjoy every minute with my two children. Just having them was already a miracle.

I dressed with everything I could, threw out the dirty water of the basin in which Dudi's things were soaked. An ugly dirty spot formed itself on the white and puffy snow. A fresh and pure inebriating air penetrated the cellar through the door I had left half open, relieving the strong smell of the potatoes and vegetables kept there.

My son certainly needed to breathe a bit of fresh air into his weakened lungs. Also the strong smell of querosene from yesterday had to evaporate. But the bitter cold of the early morning was too much and I had to close the door after a while.

Before I went upstairs I alerted Dudi of all possible precautions he had to know.

" Take advantage of your time and rest as much as you can, this will do you good and when it will be possible I will bring you some delicious bread and milk."_

I covered him well, embraced and kissed him fondly and I was impressed with his gratefulness and love his eyes expressed.

I ran upstairs hurriedly and started my everyday usually work in the house, which seemed this time to be not coming to an end and it got very late when I finally could take down the café, bread and milk for Dudi.

The bitter cold made everybody stay at home. I had to hang on a cord outside the washing and also Dudi's things. Between so many children's clothes Dudi's things could not be noted. What worried me was that to dry in the cold took a long time and Dudi had the only change to wear I have just stretched outside. The weak winter sun was not sufficient to dry things in one day. The intense frost made the wet things freese and get hard changing them often to funny figures and when taken inside at night they turned wet again. Sometimes it took days for the things to get dry. It worried me what would happen if we would have to run away and his things would not be dry?
I had to remind myself again, remembering the decision I had taken not to worry ahead of time.

The twisted pieces of clothes from the cold outside on the cord, made me remember the attic of my childhood where we used to dry our sheets and clothes in winter time and where we loved to play and invent devilish children's games.

Dudi's first day in the cellar was gray and cold. However, at midday the weak rays of the winter sun

succeeded to breake through the thick gray mass of air and warmed up slightly the earth. The children, then, dressed up well, took the sledges and ran to the hill behind the house. Marina already took part in this game.

After lunch, when Dona Maria was asleep, I had the opportunity to go down and take some food for Dudi. When he heard me enter, as I opened the door with my own keys, taken by surprise, he almost fell down from a box he had carried near the tiny window, to be able to observe the other children's fun.

" Mami, mami, Marina is playing with the others on the snow. How she grew, Mami! She is so beautiful! Look, look how she is climbing on the sledge!"

I went to the small window and looked at the outside world in which my son could not take part. A world, which he could only watch through a split of the frozen window, he succeeded by breathing on it and rubbing the place with a finger. Only this way could my Dudi see the sun, watch the other children play and his little sister amongst them. He watched a world that should be his and was, however, forbidden for him. So small he was condemned to an unfair captivity.

Who one day will be able to understand, who will be able to judge?- I thought to myself.

Dudi, despite being deprived of all this, gave hearty laughs, staying on a box, glad to see the other children's happiness rolling in the snow on the hill.

My son ate well and was happy and I was even more happy, watching him eat.

The month of January was coming to the end. Jan did not appear after the last fright he had. The passing days were precious. I counted them as if my Dudy's survival depended on them.

The lice disappeared, only the boils got still worse. They appeared on his whole body and some were so big that they even caused fever. In this state, if we would have to run away, he would have to be carried, because the biggest were in his auxiliary cavities and these disturbed him most.

This would oblige me to take very few clothes. One change of clothes was always ready. The thermal bottle, which I had stopped using for some time, was used again.

The days were passing quickly. The quiet nights made me sleep better. Dudi, despite the boils, looked much better.

One Sunday we baked a chicken. Despite being big it hardly gave a piece for so many people. I kept my tiny piece for Dudi, remembering what Boris had said:

" when the war will be over we will bake a beautiful chicken and eat and eat until we wont be able to eat anymore."

The dreamed baked chicken turned to be for us a symbol of festivity and rejoicing. Also Dudi, savoring the piece of chicken remembered what his father said and sucking the bone, said:

" You think, mami, that the day will come when you will be able to bake the chicken, which pappy promised? Toast it well till it would get very brown, releasing when cut, the juicy gravy?! Hum mami, what a delicacy! I can even sense it's smell!."

Michal was continuing to bring good news every night, about the advancing of the allied military forces and their occupation of the north of France. The polish guerillas animated by this news, applied hard blows to the Germans.

One evening he brought the news about an espectacular escape of political prisoners from the concentration camp. There was supposed to be searching in all houses of the neighborhood. Stasia got terrified. She came running home, the next day, saying that in the nearby village the Germans were searching every house.

And now?! What to do?! DUDI had no documents. Everything would be discovered, causing extreme grief and danger to the whole family.

The hour I most feared had arrived. I had to run away again. It would be unforgivable in exchange for so much goodness from these people to expose them to such a big danger.

Chapter XII: The new flight.

When Dona Maria, was having, as usual, her afternoon nap, in peace, ignoring the danger, Stasia went with me down to the cellar to help prepare Dudi for the journey.
One big boil, ready to burst, hurt him very much, but this was not the moment for pity. I had to act rapidly, I had to run… but where to?!

"Where to?" I asked Stasia
She looked at me with eyes full of tears and said:
" Go to the house of the forest guard. On the way when it will get dark, light a match every fifteen minutes. If some of the guerillas will see it, they will alert Jan. This is our combination. If the Germans will have searched our house and the danger will be over, I will come and bring you back. Marina will remain meanwhile with us, as we decided before"_.
The girl was playing happily with the other children, so I did not even say good-bye to her.

Dressed up with everything we had and Dudi wearing Antek's old shoes, we left our refuge. In a bag over my shoulder I carried the big thermal bottle, a tin of powdered milk and some slices of bread with butter, which the dear, good hearted Stasia had prepared for us in a great hurry.

" God will escort you -Stasia said- trembling with emotion.- " I will quickly arrange everything not to leave any vestige that anybody slept here. I don't know yet what

I will say upstairs, but I hope that tomorrow you will be back."

_" You know very well, my dear friend, that this would be too good to be true. Thank you for everything. God bless you. Take care of Marina."

For both of us, although we tried, it was impossible not to cry. We embraced each other heartily.

We left the house by the back, not to be seen through the window by Dona Maria. I had to cover Dudi's face with a shawl, because the sudden frozen air made him lose his breath. Being closed for days in the cellar, the cold air was too strong and it took him some minutes until he was able to breathe normally again.

We had to take distance from the house as quickly as possible. My documents were apparently in order. The address on them was by purpose not very clear, in order not to reveal from where I was coming.

Once farther from the house, I kept Dudi by his hand and we started to walk slower, like a mother and son would have a walk together. Fortunately it had not snowed this day and the snow was hard and did not stick to our shoes. We were longing to enter the forest and when we finally arrived we were breathless, although we had walked slower.

The air was bitter cold and on the shawls near our nos and mouth there formed scabs of ice.

The majestic trees not only hid us from possible eyes, but also sheltered us a bit from the intense cold.

Once more the forest sheltered me magnanimously, like the first night of my flight.

It was half past three in the afternoon. We stopped for a while and only then we dared to talk.

_ " How are you, my son? _" I asked my half stunned boy.

_ " I am fine, mami, I am not even tired."_

" Now we don't need to hurry. I don't know how far it is to the house of the forest guard. I only know that if we wont find a shelter to sleep, we will have to be awake, in movement, not to die frozen."

*"And if we would go to auntie Eva's house?"*

*" She also is being suspected. Perhaps the Germans had already searched her place… Let's continue going, my son. We can stop from time to time, we only can not fall asleep."*_

We continued our walk. The quietness was complete. The snow creaked under our feet. The menacing dawn was already starting. More a bit and there will be night. I was afraid of the night, of the tiredness, of the sleep… but at the same time I was anxious for the dark to be able to light a mutch, which was supposed to save us.

We had already walked about an hour. It was after four o'clock. The days were short and the nights very long. We had in front of us twelve hours of darkness, twelve hours of uncertainty.

At five o'clock, when it was already very dark, I lit the first match, which burned down slowly, till it's end. Wormed up by walking we did not feel cold. The whiteness of the snow on the floor, was our guide. Our eyes got used to the dark.

After fifteen minutes I lit another match, keeping it high up, to be seen from far, hoping for somebody's help.

Also this second match burned up till it's end, and the forest continued in silence.

Every fifteen minutes we lit a match, we stopped for a short rest and continued walking and walking…

When we got to light the sixth mutch I felt disanimated, without showing it to Dudi.

It was already half past six, dinner time. What were they thinking of me there in the house? What explanation did Stasia give them? And my Marina? Did she miss me? Fortunately, still very small, she did not understand anything that was going on.

Dudi, with a lot of courage, hiding the pain, walked near me; my small hero stripped of his childhood. It's very sad, when a child, instead of being a child has to turn to a hero.

Following the explanation of Stasia, there were still some more hours of walking until the house of the forest guard.

The place where the passage was getting narrower, so that only one person could pass through it, was supposed to be the place more observed by the guerillas- Stasia had said. I hoped that here somebody would see my lighted match and so I lit several, one after an other. However, nobody appeared, nothing moved.

The path started to be slippery and difficult. Dudi fell down several times, once on his big boil, which made him limp. Very courageously he did not even groan once.

We decided to stop a bit and look for a cut down tree to sit down on it. We could not sit on the floor, because from

the heat of our body's the snow would melt and wet our clothes.

After searching for quite a while, we found a stump of a big tree, on which we could sit both together. It was covered with snow and I cleaned it with the sleeve of my coat and covered it with the towel in which dear Stasia wrapped the bread and finally we sat down.

The place was ideal for a small meal of bread with butter and café.

Still hoping that perhaps this time something would happen I lit one more match and again nothing happened. Leaning on my shoulder Dudi fell asleep. I let him sleep a bit. Only than I felt how very tired I was. A profound discouragement came over me. I arrived to think to fall asleep here with my son and to die together in the frost. Marina would grow up as the daughter of Dona Maria and Michal. In a short time she would forget having had another mother. Of her father she did not remember at all. I hugged Dudi, with both arms keeping him tight to me.

The majestic trees in the forest continued immobile. Also the nature seemed to sleep it's long quiet winter sleep. The quietness and silence were absolute.

Suddenly I heard a noise, from far away, only audible in the calm of the night. Half asleep, this scarce noise was sufficient to wake me up suddenly, perhaps saving our lives.

Dudi also waked up and said frightened:

_ *"Mami I slept, did you sleep too?!"*_

"I don't know, my son. I only know that I heard some noise. Perhaps this were the Germans; if it would be them,

remember that you are not Jewish. That my name is Eugenia Pieczarek and yours is Jan Pieczarek.You have to pretend that you are very sick. I will carry you, because you can not walk. Will you remember, my son? I will tell them that I am bringing you to a doctor or a hospital. I heard that there is a hospital near by. Meanwhile we will continue seated. This way will be harder to be seen."_

Our hearts were beating very fast. The noise was coming nearer. We could hear human voices, but it was too far to distinguish the language they spoke.

These certainly were Germans, the guerillas would not dare to speak so loud _ I thought to myself.

" Won't you light a match, mami? If these were the guerillas they wont be able to find us."

"No, my son. It is better to stay here quietly and wait."_ I was very nervous and worried. I tried to overcome my nervousness. In the end I thought: Eugenia Pieczarek does not sound Jewish.

Fortunately, the noise distanced itself slowly, losing itself in the silence of the night.

It was already eleven o'clock. Our feet started to freeze, we had to walk to warm them up. Dudi continued limping, walking couragously. The tiredness seemed to vanquish us. The way now was uphill and the walking got still more difficult. We slipped constantly hurting each time when we fell. In the end we arrived finally at the top of the hill.

Well in front of us, far away we saw a small indistinct light. It could be the light of the guard's house. We

decided to stop. I lit a match, afterwards one more and then another one, every fifteen minutes, and nothing moved.

We continued our walk. The way down hill was less tiring. The passage now larger let us walk one beside the other holding hands.
The light seen from afar started to take shape. It was a window. For certain the window of the forest guards house. This window transformed itself of our object. Seeing it in front of us it seemed to diminish our tiredness and even the pain of Dudi's boils. After half an hour of animated walk the passage finished suddenly! We entered into a large flat plain ground surrounded by trees.

The house, was now clearly visible in front of us. We were only separated from it by the plain ground.

The silence was frightening. I wondered why there was no dog near by. We stopped. I felt in the air the imminence of danger.

Suddenly… "Hände hoch! Wer ist da?!"- Hands up! Who is there?!"- shouted a terrible voice. It was too late to run away or hide. I got frozen with fear.
We were lost! I started crying together with Dudi. I lifted him up and, trembling I stepped out to the middle of the clearance. Suddenly, three Germans appeared around us, with machineguns pointed toward us.
_"Was machst du denn da?! "What are you doing here?!" asked one of them.
_"Ich brauche Doktor Kind krank… I stammered in a by purpous broken german, because Jews in Poland generally spoke german well.

One of them stepped forward and asked me in a pure polish:

" What are you doing here at this hour? Don't you know that it is forbidden for civilians to circulate at night? Do you have a license?"_

"My son is sick. I need a doctor, he has enormous boils. We left early. I did not know that the night would catch us still here. However, the boy could not walk, I had to carry him and this made us late. Help me, please."_ I begged. The German who spoke polish, turned to the others and translated what I had said.

_" Nim sie herein in's house"- take her inside the house"- one of them ordered.

They took us inside the house, iluminated and warm. A woman seated near the fireplace, looked at us frightened. Dudi was trembling.

"Don't be afraid, my dear"_ I whispered into his ear. I seated myself on a stool with Dudi on my lap. I felt exhausted, to the point of falling down more from terror than of tiredness.

The solder who spoke polish entered behind us. He asked for my documents and did not mind the documents of Dudi, fortunately. He looked at my documents, compared the photograph on them with me, and gave them back, saying: *" Wait here"_* and left immediately.

We continued there stunned. After some time I laid down Dudi on a bench and covered him with my coat.

"Try to sleep" I whispered" It is good for you to be rested."_

_" Where are you from?" The woman asked in polish.

I gave her the name of the village and asked her:

" Are you the wife of the forest guard?"

"Yes"_

" Where is he?. I was told that he would help me."

"You came too late" she answered, making a sign to be silent and gave me a cup of hot tea, which I divided with Dudi.

*The hospital is very far from here?"*_ I encouraged myself to ask.

"No. Perhaps a few kilometers."_

" And your husband, will he come soon?"

For an answer she put a finger to her lips. I understood not to ask anymore.

With his head on my lap, the boy fell asleep. The heat of the fireplace, the silence and the extreme tiredness took over me and I also fell asleep.

I woke up by the sudden entering of the two soldiers, who brought in with them the outside cold.

Through the window could be seen the gray light of the down.

The woman got up immediately and served the soldiers two big mugs of hot tea. It could be seen that she was used to doing it. She spoke a perfect German. Both took out from their soldier's knapsacks big sandwiches of bread and salami. I desocupied the bench for them and sat down on a chair with Dudi on my lap.

"Was für eine Kälte! Got sei Dank ist die Nacht schon vorbei. -Thank God the night is over." - said one of them.

For me, on the contrary, I was little interested in the ending of the night. Here, in this place, we were at least protected from the cold by a fireplace.

*"Da hast du eine Stuhle"*_ Here have a sandwich"_ said one turning in my direction with a big sandwich in his hand.
"Danke"- I thankt him in German
I took some bits and gave the rest of it to Dudi, who did not want to eat.
"What will they do with us?" Whispered Dudi.
"I don't know, but keep calm, God is great " I whispered into his ear hugging him in my arms.
The Germans ate and drank, warming themselves up by the fireplace and only then I could see that they were not so young anymore. One had even white hair. Both seemed quite human. For the first time I have been near a German soldier without feeling terrorized. Moreover, the third soldier who remained outsides made me feel frightened. He spoke good polish and it was hard to find a Pole who did not distinguish a Jew from a non Jew.
Is it possible, that my "appearance is so good" that even he did not recognize my crime of being Jewish?

In Poland lived many Poles of German descendent. When the Germans invaded Poland these Poles were of big value for the German army. The majority of them were spys. They were so important that their roofs were specially marked to be spared by the German bombs. In our town they bombed the Catholic church only and not the evangelical one, which was on the opposite side of the same street, because these Poles of German descendent were generally evangelical. With the war they became the feared "Volksdeutsche".
The noise of a car engine, outside, and the voices of the Germans giving orders to the woman to call the head

quarters, to see if there would be some news, woke me up from the apathy I found myself.

_" Sie kommen mit " - You, lady, come with us- said the elder one, turned towards me.

Even having been called "lady"- "Sie", in German, meant already something, I could not avoid showing some fear. Seeing my expression of fright, he asked the woman to explain to me that they were taking me to a hospital.

I thanked him smiling, with eyes ful of tears, trembling with fear, embracing my son , who was also trembling.

Before I left I said to the guard's wife:

_"My name is Eugenia, if somebody from the village would ask about me, tell them where I went, please. Thank you and goodbye.

"Goodbye and God should guard you."_

Outside the house it was freezing, but the cold helped us to disguise the other reason for trembling, the trembling of fear.

_"Mami, where are they taking us? What will they do to us?- Dudi asked weeping.

" They will take us to a hospital to treat your boils. Don't worry, my son."_

Touching his forehead with my lips I could feel that he had fever. Even this helped disguise the reason for our flight. The fever made our flight appear more verisimilar. Even the Voksdeutsch, seemed not to have doubts when he said:

" It is not far and you will be in a warm place soon"_

Everything seemed a miracle. I covered the boy well and rolled myself in the shawl, to hide my trembling.

Chapter XIII: The hospital and the treatment.

After a few minutes of driving the jeep stopped. The Germans helped me get out of the jeep and lifted out the boy for me. The elder one said to the polish-speaking soldier:

*"Explain to her, that I have to enter first and give the necessary orders. Without it they wont be attended"*

I had understood everything he had said, but listened with much attention to the Pole's explanation.

We entered the hospital, very clean and heated. We were asked to wait in a small waiting room. It was early, nobody was there, and this was very favorable for us too. It did not take much time and a door was opened and we were asked to enter. We were received by an elderly doctor with grey hear, but still vigorous and good humored. He asked me to kindly lay down the boy on the consulting table and take off his clothes. I left only his underwear on him. The boil on his thigh had got bigger and was red and inflamed.The doctor would certainly look in the groin cavity searching for other boils and then he would see that the boy is circumcised?! Is it possible that this doctor, seeming so human, will be human?!

After having seen only the first big boil he said:

*"Armes Kind-Poor child. He has to remain in the hospital a few days for a special treatment called autovaccine."*_

_"All right, but will I be allowed to visit him?" -_I asked.

"Of course, you can. The boy seems to suffer from general exhaustion, you can leave him with me, I will take care of him, you don't need to worry."_

He spoke some polish and tried to explain everything to me. He was kind and human. With surprise I had to recognize, that there were also amongst Germans human beings.

I started to cry, moved by the uselessness of my fear. Dudi was going to be treated and nourished!. What more could I desire for now?!

The doctor went aside to talk to the soldiers who brought us and I took advantage of this moment and whispered instructions to Dudi:

" You will stay here for a few days. Be good and obedient. Eat the most you can. As soon as possible I will come to see you."_

"Will you come every day, mami? You won't sleep in the forest, will you?"_ Dudi asked me frightened.

_"No my dear, perhaps I will stay at the forest guards house or somewhere else. Don't say nothing about your life to anybody, you hear me, Janeczek?" - I reminded him of his new name.

A nurse arrived. I helped her dress the pajama on the boy, who was going to be taken to the infirmary, where there were already six other sick people, all adults.

I embraced again my son, who this time could not control his sobbing any more.

" Don't cry my love, our God is big and very soon you will be fine." _ I said

It was very hard to separate from him again and my tears were running down my cheeks, without me realizing it, and

like this I returned to the waiting room, half stunned and still carrying Dudi's clothes in my hands.

" You don't need to cry"- the doctor said- "in a few days your son will be fine"_

How could I explain to him the real reason of my crying?: my son in a good hospital, when I expected that we would be taken to a concentration camp, or be shot.?! All this seemed incredible!

And more than all this, the older of them, who seemed to be a coronal, said to the polish speaking one, to ask me if I would like to stay in his house during the boy's treatment in the hospital, as he lived nearby and it would not disturb him. Was'nt this a miracle?!

It was a miracle having a blessing from heaven and not being written on my face "my crime".

I accepted happily with a "danke", the Germans hospitality.

If he would know that I had no where to go?!

I felt sorry, not being able to give this news to my boy; he would be glad to know: "that his mother would not sleep in the forest"

Chapter XIV: Governess of a german Coronel.

The way from the hospital until the house took only a few minutes. After a few blocks of nice houses we stopped.
_"Schon sind wir da" - we arrived.
It was a nice house of bricks, a roof with red tiles, all covered with snow. Painted all white, with green shutters it looked like the witch's house of the children's tales.
Climbing a few stairs we entered a small living room with a typical European heater all covered with glazed tiles. A real "Kachelofen". Where you could lean on with your back and worm your hands during the winter. It made me remember the good times from before the war.
I was stupefied, standing in the middle of the room, still holding Dudi's things.
The German coronal entered after me, closed the door and said:
"Kommen Sie herein, machen sich's bequem- come in, make yourself comfortable."
I only stammered: "Danke, danke"- thank you, thank you.
He showed me the house: the entrance was through a corridor, where from, one door to the left opened to the kitchen and an other, in the front, led to a living room. From the living room there was an other small corridor from where the doors to two bedrooms and a bathroom were situated.
Everything was new and wonderful. It probably was newly reconstructed by the Germans. It was very seldom,

to find at these times, in a small town, realy a village, a house with such modern facilities. Generally the houses had no canalization and the toilets were outside the house, made from wooden planks.

I entered the kitchen; it was spacious, warm and beautiful. There was a table with four chairs, a cupboard to keep dishes leaning on one of the walls, a basin, a stove to be heated with wood. On two windows were white curtains with yellow balls and all the furniture was painted in white and yellow. Everything seemed like in a dream!

The colonel or tenant introduced himself as "Oberst Karl Zahn", clickinging the heels of his boots in a soldier's reverence.

He was very polite. He opened a door to a food storage, full of provisions of food in tins, many in jars cold "vecki".

Since the beginning of the war, I hadd not seen such an abundance of food! There was even real café and a whole bag of sugar! It was incredible, unbelievable!

Karl left for a few minutes and returned bringing with him white small rolls with poppy seeds; things I had not seen, or eaten, for more than five years!

The breakfast was a real banquet. After finishing his café Karl went to the military quarters. I remained in the house not for long alone. He came back and explained to me that generally he eats lunch in the quarters, but if I would like to cook he would eat with pleasure at home.

And this way I became a governess of a German colonel!

So much happened to me in only one morning that I felt stunned. Had interned my son in a excellent hospital, drunk a real caffeé in the company of a German soldier, who did not shout and was kind to me!

He returned after half an hour and said that he needed to sleep, because at night he would be again on night duty. He showed me an alarm clock and told me that he would like to wake up at one o'clock, but if he would not appear, he asked me to be so kind and knock at his door. And if in the meantime I could cook some food for both of us, he would be very pleased to eat some home made food, which he did not have for a long time. And with a large gesture he opened the provision's door and asked:

*"Ist das genug für's Mittagessen- is this enough for the lunch?"*

Karl spoke to me in German, gesticulating, making me understand and I answered him smiling and nodding with my head.

He was not young, he probably was about fifty years old, and perhaps that's why he was kind and human. It was said in the ghetto that the older Germens belonged to the Wehrmacht and not to the SS assassins and were more understanding. Looking at him I remembered this. He was elegant, well educated and behaving nicely.

After he went to sleep I opened the door of the food storage and saw so many things that I did not know what to choose.

What a paradox- I thought to myself: for only a few hours ago we were eating with Dudi bread in the forest and did

not know what we would eat next day and here I was standing in front of so much food and did not know what to choose. I remembered the typical German beloved dish: "Sauer Kraut mit Kartofeln"-Sauer cabbage with potatoes, with smoked bacon, or sausage. There were both on the shelve. I decided to make the sausage. I felt so happy that I wanted to sing. Karl liked the food and it seemed that I had been accepted as a cook. It was decided, that after I had cleaned up the kitchen, I could go to see my boy at the hospital.
When I was ready to leave, Karl offered me a lift till the hospital, as this was also his direction. Seated already in the military jeep, he gave me the keys of the house, so I would not need to wait on the street till his arrival.
Food, home and transport! What more could I expect?!

When I opened the door of the infirmary, I could not believe what I saw! My Dudi was seated on the bed with many toys around him. My son was playing again, he seemed to be a child again. He was so absorbed with the toys that he did not see me coming in. I let him play and was happy to watch him from the entrance door. Only when he heard a womans groaning in the corner of the room, he lifted his head and saw me. He greeted me with a large smile and called me in a low voice:
"Mami, my dear mami."
We stayed for a long time embraced in silence which said a lot.
"How are you my dearest son? And your boils, how are they? Are they better, hurting less?"
" They don't hurt me anymore. Only when they change the dressing it hurts and a lot of pus is running out of them.

*To-day in the morning the doctor took some pus into a syringe, to make an autovaccine. I took a painful shot and did not cry, and as a prise for it the doctor gave me two small cars and the nurse gave me a puzzel game. Everybody treats me very well. I only worry about you, mami, for your staying outside in this cold."*_

" About this I wanted to talk to you and give you the good news. Everything seems to be a miracle.I live five minutes from here in the house of one of the Germans, who brought us here. His name is Karl and he is very nice to me. "

_*"And you are not afraid of him?"*

" Not now anymore. He is nice and treats me very well. You should see what a beautiful house he has! For us, my dear- I whispered into his ear - more dangerous are now the Poles than the Germans, and that's why I am asking you again, my son, speak to them as little as possible and don't say anything about our lives. You eat well? Do you want me to bring you some more food?"_

"No mami, I have enough, I even left a little bread with butter for you"- and took from under his pillow a small wrapping.

I was moved by his thoughtfulness and happy not to be hungry and obliged to accept Dudi's bread and be able to thank him and refuse saying:

" Thank you my love, I ate well today, and even the same bread with poppy seeds on top like the one you have kept for me"

Dudi also could not believe in all that good things which were happening to us. I advised him to eat as much as he could and rest, because we could not know what tomorrow might bring.

" How will it be at night, mami? I will be sad not to have you near me, it was so good to be together"_

" We can not want too much, my son. Better it could not be. I am nearby, in a nice warm house. Imagine if I would have to return to the forest, hungry and would have to accept the bread from you.

I had better leave now and not disturb the other sick people. Sleep peacefully and tomorrow I will come again."_

I embraced him and left the nursery on tiptoe to make less possible noise.

At the door, I met the doctor, who congratulated me:

"I have to tell you that I have never seen a child so courageous like your son. To change the dressing on his boils, we took him out of the nursery not to disturb the others with his crying. But he behaved like a hero. I could not believe it when I saw his pursed lips and did not hear even a peek from his mouth, when we gave him an injection. Amazing!."_

" Thank you. He showed me the toys you gave him. God bless you"

"He really deserves them. Now we don't need anymore to take him out. We can change the dressing here. Not even with a shot he cries." _

" How long do you think he will have to stay at the hospital?"

" Here, between us"- the doctor said_ he could go home even to-day, but as long as I have a free bed I can keep him here. It's better for him. I think to keep him for more two or three days."_

"Danke, Danke für alles" Thank you thank you for everything" _ I stammered.

I went out to the deserted and cold street. Because of the blackout of the war, all windows were covered with dark paper and the streets were illuminated only by the moonlight. Again the moon was illuminating my way, helping me to find my "new home", my new hideout. I was worried not to be able to find the house in the dark. Fortunately I found it after a while and when I took the keys I realized that me Tamara Lipszyc - Eugenia Pieczarek, possessed again a key of a house.

When I was about to put the key in the lock, Karl opened the door from inside. With a set table, with a smelling cafée, milk and cake, a lunch was waiting for me. What a regales feast!

Karl was in his uniform. Dressed up to leave for his duty. Not even in my wildest dreams I could imagine me seated at a table with a German colonel. During lunch, when he was wearing a robe, he looked like a common man, a nice middle aged person. In the uniform he seemed younger, more German. He asked me to make him some sandwiches to take in his knapsack. He did not want to take café in the thermal bottle and before he left, he showed me the room where I could sleep.

We spoke with each other in a mixture of polish and German, gestures and mimics. He recommended not to open the door during the night and took with him the entrance keys.

Only when left alone I felt how tired I was. I had not slept the previous night. However, before I went to bed I returned to the table, where the fresh bread, butter and salami still was, things, which the day before made my mouth water, and I ate and ate till I couldn't anymore.

After cleaning up the kitchen, and putting away everything I went to sleep in a normal bed, in a nice room. Only then I thought about Marina. She was fine, so was Dudi now; and I fell asleep immediately.
"Well inside the mouth of the Wolf" I slept as I have not for a long time.
In the morning, it took me quite a while to remember where I was. A new day was born. I dressed and made café, which certainly would be welcome after night service. What service was it?! Did I make café for somebody who just stained his hands with innocent blood?! I should not think- I reminded myself, not to think!

I had almost finished to bring order to my room, when I heard the keys turning in the lock. Despite knowing that it can only be Karl, my heart started beating accelerated by the sight of a German soldier in the door.
" It's good to have somebody waiting with hot café. How was the night? Did you sleep well" he asked.
"I slept well, thank you."- I answered and wanted to ask how his night service was, but did not, I was afraid to know too much.

Karl washed himself, took off his uniform and came in his robe to the table and I was glad to find how he looked like a decent person.
I decided not to ask, not to be interested to know. I wanted only to survive this war with my children and nothing more. Perhaps, one day, I will be able to tell my story, but who will believe me?

It was good to be able to eat the delicious, fresh breads he had just brought and drink a real café.

When we finished the café I asked where I could wash some clothes and he showed me a staircase, which I had not noticed before, which led to the attic under the roof. There the clothes could be stretched to dry, as it used to be done in Europe in wintertime.

After Karl went to sleep, I went up the stairs and from there I could see the village. As it was very early, it was quiet and no noise at all. Suddenly I saw a cart pulled by a horse and near it a man. He looked like Michal. I looked again and saw him carry the can of milk and I had no dought, it was Michal. I went down the stairs, grabbed my coat, covered my head with a handkerchief and ran quickly to the cart's direction. When I reached it, Michal was turning it around, preparing for the way back. When he saw me, he did not even smile. He looked around to be sure that nobody saw us together, as if he would be afraid to talk to me.

I came nearer, he stepped up to the seat and continued silent. I went up too and sat near him and said:

_" Good morning Michal; how is my daughter? _" She is fine"- he answered smiling, like speaking about something nice, and immediately after he closed his face again.

*"You are angry with me. I know that my presence in your house could bring danger to your family. But I ran away, at night, with my sick son, when I discovered that there might be some danger. Would you in my place have done differently? It's hard to die when you are young and two small children look up at you. The war is coming to an end. You know it very well."_

_ "I know, we got a big fright- he said at the end. Stasia told me only one hour before the Germans came to search the house. You did well to have left the house as your son had no documents. Stasia cleaned up the cellar and did not leave any sign that somebody lived there. But all this was a big shock to us, you understand?"_

*" Of course I do understand. I hope not to be obliged to annoy you again. I want to thank you for everything you have done for me and still do for my Marina. The news is good. The Russians are already in Lodz. Have only some patience."*_

_"I am patient, but I also have children, I am afraid and I also want to live".- he answered.

*" I know, Michal, but fortunately everything went fine. There is no reason for you continue to be angry with me."*_

_" O kay, it passed. The Germans are asking questions again about Jan. We are frightened, because we do not have any news from him. When you arrived at the forest guard's house, with your son, didn't you hear anything? Where are you living?- he asked finally, showing some interest.

_" In the forest guard's house I did not hear anything and on the way nobody answered my signals, when I burned several matches, every fifteen minutes. I asked the guard's wife about him and she gave me a sign to be silent and not to ask, because I was brought to her house by German soldiers. In their presence, I could not discover anything. But I was lucky, they brought my son to the hospital and one of them allowed me to stay at his house as long as the boy will remain in the hospital. I live near by, I saw you from the window of the attic and came running to meet you. Now I will return. Give my regards to everybody and a big

hug to Stasia, and once more, thank you again for everything. God will repay you and protect you for everything you did for me. Good bye, Michal.

He did not say a word, stopped the cartt to let me down and lashed the horse.

I was there standing for a long time looking at how he was taking distance, he , who one day said:" I will never abandon you".

Here I was abandoned again. I only started my way back when the cart was far on the horizon, quite indistinguible in the morning fog.

Meantime whilst Karl was asleep, I washed the dirty clothes, prepared the lunch and was thinking of Michl's behavior, and of everybody there in the house. I felt that Stasia did not tell Michal the whole truth about me. He continued ignoring that I was Jewish. Stasia certainly had her reasons not to have told him.

When I went up to hang the clothes to dry, I could see from the window, the life in the small town. It looked as if all the houses were occupied by Germans, perhaps by families of the soldiers. They were all very well dressed and well nourished. Rarely there could be seen a polish man or woman on the street. I found myself well "in the mouth of the wolf", only the wolf did not know about the "snack".

The lunch was tasty. It was easy to cook with such a well provided storage. Karl praised the food and ate a lot.

When I was cleaning the bathtub it occurred to me the idea to ask Karl if I could use the bathtub. It took me time to bring up the courage, but when I dared at last, the answer was :"selbstverständlich" - of course.

In the afternoon I went again to see Dudi. He was much better, had better colours. The doctor had given him a chocolate tablet, but recommended him not to eat it, as long as he would not be healed from the boils. The doctor was pleased with the progressing healing and confessed to me that he was curious to see for how long the boy will resist the temptation of eating the chocolate.

I was also curious, but I knew that my son was a product of the war. After hugging happily my boy and having thanked again the doctor, I returned home happy , because nobody made any remarks about Dusi's circumcision.

The second day, of my stay at the house of a German colonel was coming to an end.

At night, immediately after Karl left for his night duty, I filled the bathtub with hot water and had my buth! What a delicious sensation. How good!! I had not had it for a very long time. In normal times very few people know how to appreciate the joy and comfort of such a bath! It was good to live! I had the impression, that my whole life, whenever I will enter a bathtub, I will remember this pleasure. After the bath I slept deeply and calmly.

The third morning in the house of Karl was beginning. I paid attention not to lose the time of milk delivery. On this morning I decided to wait for Michal on the road, farther from the prefecture, for Michal not to feel afraid to talk to me. I wanted to know a bit more about my Marina.

The road was deserted. The day was cold , but dry. It seemed that the sun would succeed to break through the thick and gray fog and warm up the frozen earth a bit.

When I heard from afar the trotting of the horse, I hid myself behind a tree. Watching this way, hidden, how big was my surprise, when I saw seated near Michal my dear Stasia. I ran to hug her.

My dear Stasia, when she only knew where I was, she came immediately to see me, with no fear, even knowing that I was Jewish!

Michal stopped the cart when he saw me. Stasia stepped down and came running into my arms. Michal answered only my "good morning" and went to deliver the milk. We, me and Stasia could talk at ease until he finished his work in the village.

We hugged and kissed each other heartily. I was moved and happy that she continued liking me, even after I revealed to her my secret. I embraced her crying and she also cried. I told her what happened to us during that first night of our flight in the forest. How we almost died in the frost of the night, how we met the Germans and how they believed that we were looking for a hospital or a doctor and finally, how Dudi's boils practically saved our lives. Stasia was happy to hear about our good luck. I gave her my address and told her about my concern about where we would go after Dudi's release from the hospital.

For Stasia there was no problem; she would be always ready to help and said:

_" Let father know when this will be and we will think of a way out"__

"I did not talk to Karl about it. I will speak to-day after my visit to the hospital. And my small one, how is she?"__

" Oh, she is fine. She only asked about you the day you left, and I told her "mami will come later", and now before

she falls asleep she repeats:" mami will come later". She is a fatty. You don't need to worry about her, I take good care of her. "_

" Thank you my dear, about this I never had any doubt. You have some news from Jan?"_

" Jan did not appear any more. The Germans are watching the forests. We only know that he is not in prison. We succeeded to send him a message for him not to dare to appear"_

Stasia took out of a bag two big slices of bread with butter for us.

_"My dear, dear friend, how thoughtful of you! Fortunately now we have enough food, but I will accept gratefully and eat with pleasure your precious "bread of friendship" so rare in these times of war.

"But please, don't bring us food anymore now. Your presence is for me the biggest stimulation I can desire. I am very happy that you came for two reasons: for the pleasure to see you again and to see that you are not angry with me, for the fact that I could have brought danger to your family. Your father seems to be angry. And your mother is she angry too? How is her health?"_

" It was a big shock for her when she knew that you went without even saying good-by to her. She thought it a lack of gratitude. She got terrified when we told her that there would be a searching in the house. Till now she does not know that your son was hidden in the cellar. I did not tell to anybody that you are Jewish, neither father knows. I thought it more prudent this way. I only told father that you were hiding your son and ran away because he had no documents. Yesterday he told only me that he saw you and

found it better not to say anything to mother and the children"_

"I also think it's better for them not to know about me yet."_

" Father is returning. The time goes so quickly"_

" Yes, unfortunately. Hug and kiss for me my small one and God should bless you for what you have done and do for me."_

We both could not avoid tears of our good bye. Michal answered dryly to my "good -by" and did not even look at me.

The cart disappeared quickly in the matinal fog. I returned to my new "home" drying my tears.

Visiting my boy in the hospital, I could see with big satisfaction that he had recuperated some color and happiness; even his hair regained its brilliance. My son returned to be quite the beautiful little boy he used to be.

He greeted me with his beautiful smile, with two little dimples, which only a few days ago were ugly wrinkles. It was a pleasure to see him recuperated like this.

The doctor was enchanted with his brave behavior. If he would know that he had in front of him a real small hero, whom the unjust suffering stripped of his childhood. I don't wish for any child this destiny.

"If the recuperation will continue like this I could free him from the hospital in two days"- the doctor said.

My heart stopped beating with this news and I needed some time to control myself and be able to say:

" Thank you, but could you let me know a day before to make some preparations."_

*" Of course" agreed the doctor_* " but he will have to come to the hospital to have his autovaccines, which will start to-morrow." and having said this- he said good by and left. I sat down on Dudi's bed and told him about my happy encounter with Michal and Stasia.

" And when I will leave the hospital, where will we go mami?" _ asked my little hero.

"Don't worry, my dear darling, to-day I will ask the colonel if he would permit you to stay with me in his house till the autovaccines will be finished. Behave well my boy." I kissed and hugged him, and left.

Being assured to have some more days of tranquility in front of me, I ran quickly home to prepare the lunch, as I was afraid to be late. But I succeeded to be on time. Immediately after lunch I explained to Karl the boys situation with the autovacceens in the hospital. He listened to me with attention and said:

" If he won't disturb my sleep, he can come. The doctor told me that he behaves very well. We can try."_

"Thank you very much" I answered" It was very kind of you to inquire about his health"_

I would certainly have embraced him, if he wouldn't be a German, _ I thought to myself.

Karl went to sleep and I continued my work and as soon as I could, I ran to give the good news to Dudi, happy to be able to have him near me again, in a beautiful house, full of confort and food.

The third day of my stay at Karl's house began, and from the window of the attic I saw Michl's arrival and decided

not to look him up if he would come alone. He was alone, and before leaving he looked around, but not for long. I felt a feeling of pain and sorrow seeing him leave.

At lunch time, Karl told me, that this was his last duty of night service this week and he wont need to sleep during the day anymore. When he left he gave me a lift to the hospital.
Dudi was better and his face was visibly fuller. He ate very well and the scar of the big boil on his thigh was quite dry.
Fortunately, for what I was most afraid; some commentary about the boys circumcision, did not happen. And this, till to day, I did not understand.

The doctor told me that in a day or two I could take him out of the hospital. Pleased I went "home". Karl arrived shortly after me. I found him strange. Only sometime later I realized that he was drunk. I was afraid. The dinner was on the table, but we both ate little. Karl was talking non stop, things which I did not understand, repeating the whole time:
"Ende der Scheiße, Ende der Scheiße. Aber wie kommt man da heraus.? Das ist das Problem!" - End of the shit, end of the shit. But how to get out of it? That is the problem-

After dinner Karl went to the living room, smoking his pipe and was listening to the radio. I washed the dishes quickly, did not even think of having a bath. I said "Good night" to him and went quickly to my room trying as quietly

as possible to close the door with the key from inside. This night I could not sleep quietly.

Next day, the fifth day of my stay there, I decided to take the boy "home". With him near me I would feel more secure. Early in the morning, I went to the hospital. The doctor embraced Dudi and said to him:
"You are already a small, but a big man.(Ein kleiner-großer Mann) and as a primium for good behavior, you can already eat your chocolate, but you have to come every day to me and take an injection."_

I thanked the doctor and the nurses and we left happily hand in hand. It was good to feel again his tiny hand in mine and to take him with me.

It was very cold and to warm up we walked very quickly. Fortunately, Dudi did not limp anymore.
Aroundnd the corner, Karl was in the jeep, waiting. I don't know if he saw us accidentally, or he did it on purpose, anyhow, it was good to enter the warm house after the frozen street.

We sat all three at the table. I had prepared a good lunch, but I could see that my son was not eating at ease.

In the afternoon, when we were left alone, I prepared a bath for Dudi and reminded him that he could not make any noise when Karl was asleep. I showed him the attic, which proved to be his favorite place to stay and play. He used

to stay for hours and watch through the window the life in the village.

Dudi visibly avoided Karl. He asked me if he could eat earlier and afterwards go to sleep.

That evening, fortunately, Karl did not come drunk and excused himself for his behavior of the previous evening. He even started to recount to us about the bombardment of Dresden, where his wife and two of his three children were. He did not have news from them, but their bodies were not found and he still had some hope that they were alive. He showed the pictures of his wife and children: two girls of 16 and 14 years old, and a boy of twelve. The older girl was safe, because she had stayed that weekend, with her grandmother in the country.
He had beautiful children, strong and well dressed.
They were children, not heroes.

When I was already in bad I heard Karl leave. Dudi was not asleep and we talked:
*" Mami - said Dudi_* I am so afraid when I see Karl in his uniform that I can hardly eat and even your delicious food loses it's taste, because of this hateful uniform. When I see Karl I can not stop thinking that it could have been he, who killed father."_
__*"From tomorrow, my boy, you will eat before us and* immediately afterwards you will go to bed and I will tell Karl as an excuse, that you still have pains in your leg."_
We embraced each other and fell asleep.

It was still dark, when I was awakened by some noise. I heard Karl's voice singing in a drunkard tune. There was somebody talking to him.

Our door was fortunately closed and even with my son near me I was afraid. The boy did not wake up, probably being used to the noises of other sick people in the same room with him in the hospital.

I heard voices of two men, the nois of boots beingthrown to the floor, the closing of the front door, and afterwards the closing of the door to Karl's room. He was probably trying to forget his worries in drink.
I could not fall asleep anymore and when it got a bit clearer I got up to prepare the cafe.
Very early I heard Karl open his door and run to the bathroom; he was vomiting and groaning.
When he felt better and saw me in the kitchen, and smelt the cafe he said:
*" Your are an angel. My head seems to burst from pain. Forgive me, I tried to drown my pain in drinking, but I did not succeed. This lack of news kills me. You understand?"*_
If I understood? But what could I answer him?

My pretence that I did not understand German well, was my salvation. I moved my head, listened to him, he continued speaking, and with this he seemed to feel easier.
In the end he took a pill for his headache and went to sleep again and asked me to wake him up at seven o'clock, because at seven thirty he had to leave the house.

Dudi remained in bed until Karl left. It was better for the boy to see him as little as possible.

Through the window of the attic, together with Dudi we watched Michals arrival. Again he was alone. It was better this way, I thought to myself. Stasia remained at home with Marina. This left me more tranquil.

After breakfast, we went to the hospital. The doctor examined Dudi and indicated some more injections. This way, each painful shot of the needle, meant for us, one more day of a place where we could stay.

The nostalgia for my daughter was getting tough. Not having met Michal for days left me without news about my little girl. Dudi asked about her the whole time: "did she grow/ did she change? Is she fine? Will she remember us?" Questions I could not answer. I decided then that next day I would wait for Michal and inquire about the child.

On this day, Dudi had lunch in bed. I explained to Karl that the injection was very painful and that he needed some more rest as he is still very weak.

After lunch, when Karl left, we both went up to the attic and from there we saw strange things happening. In front of several houses big trucks were stationed and packed with furnitur and other objects. It looked like a general move. We thought that this might be a change of the stationed military families.

Dudi used to stay at the window for many hours and when he saw Karl arriving home earlier than usual, he came to alert me and ran into his bed.

I prepared our dinner quickly. Karl ate sparingly and spoke very little this evening. He seemed to be worried.
After dinner he went to his room and remained there for quite a long while. Afterwards he left again.

Chapter XV : The end of the war.

Something, that we ignored, was certainly happening.

Again alone, we ate a good dinner and slept still better. When I awoke, next morning, I saw the door of Karl,s room wide open: some things were thrown in disorder on the floor, the wardrobe almost empty and the pictures, which used to stay on the night table, were not there. At first, I did not understand what it meant. Only later, when I found the letter on the kitchen table in which he wrote I understood:
" Eugenia, you were very kind to me. Thanks for everything. My duty call's me and as a soldier, I can not behave differently. Excuse me for not having said good-by, but you were asleep. Everything, that I leave in the house is yours. Good luck. Karl."_

I could not believe it! I went up to the window of the attic. It was very early and the quietness of the village was absolute and frightening. Everything seemed to sleep, though, something strange was in the air. On the streets, nothing moved.

It was the end of February. The morning dawn was icy cold and gray. I felt cold and returned to bed, very worried. What should I do? There could arrive another German in Karl's place!? This thought made me desperate. Our peace of a few days seemed to have come to an end.

I decided that we woudn't leave the house, as long as nobody woul bother us. I could not sleep anymore. I got frightened and woke up Dudi, thinking that perhaps it is better to be dressed and ready, in case it would be necessary to run away again.
I prepared some sandwiches, filled the thermal bottle with hot cafe and as I was already accustomed to do, I prepared the knapsack with some clothes and we were waiting for new developments, watching the whole time through the attic window.
Half past seven in the morning, the time when Michal used to deliver the milk, he did not appear. Something was happening. I switched on the radio very low but it was silent
" My boy, everything is very strange. Is it possible that everybody is still asleep at this hour? Nothing is moving in this town? Nobody got up and went out?"_

" It's true, mami, at this hour there were many people entering and leaving the bakery, and now nobody can be seen. Some thing happened."_

"We wont go out eitherer, we will be as silent as possible, till the situation will be cleared up. We will take turns at the window and watch constantly what is going on outside."_

In this uncertainty a whole day passed. About midday we heard some shootings from far away, which stopped after a while. At night, I closed the house well, we ate early, without lighting any lamp and went to sleep fully dressed up, to be ready for all eventualities.

Dudi slept a bit, but I was to nervous to fall asleep. What could have happened? The Germens run away? Was it the end of the war?… I did not find peace and in the full night I went up to look outside the window to watch the street. It seemed to me , that some shadows were moving near the prefecture, where Michal used to deliver the milk. But the distance and the darkness did not allow me to see anything clearly.

The night seemed endless. Why didn't the morning come at once!?

I went to bed and near warm Dudi, tired as I was, I fell asleep and woke up when the day was already clear.

We heard voices on the street and ran to the attic. People were embracing and kissing each other in big excitement and happiness.

It was the end of the war!!!

The people who embraced each other were not Germans, they were Poles, but not Jews. I did not know, if for us, polish Jews, the war was also over.

I thought better to wait for news from Stasia. She would not forget us. Taking turns at the attic window, we spent a whole day waiting for some news, which would give us also the right to participate in this great historical moment.

In the afternoon, when I was already conformed to spend an other night in this uncertainty, Dudi called me, all excited. I went up and saw a cart coming on it's habitual way. When it came nearer a bit, there was no doubt anymore: it was Michal and near him two more persons. One was for sure Stasia , but the other one I could not yet distinguish. Before discovering who the other one was I decided to go to them, as they did not know were we lived. *"Dudi, I will go to meet them, because they don't know were we live, or better, we both go together and close up the house."*

_"Mami, mami, it's Marina! Marina sits near Stasia.!
The street was full of people. Some were robbing the German houses, shouting and quarreling. As I could see now, we were living in a small city with only German inhabitants. It was good that we did not go outside the house before. The polish population could have taken us for Germans and killed us. It could have been very dangerous.

Dressed up, with warm shawls around our necks, we ran to encounter our visitors. Stasia recognized us from afar and was showing to Marina our arrival.

At last I could embrace again my dear daughter! How she had grewn!, got heavy and fatty!
Our happiness and commotion was big.

" Aren't you anymore angry with me?" I asked Michal
_*"No"* - he answered bashfully.
I embraced and kissed him on both his cheeks and pointing to Dudi I said:
_"This is my son Janeczek. It was he I was hiding in your cellar and it was with him I ran away that night.
It's finished, Michal! I am alive thanks to you!. And now I will show you were we live. We will have together a real cafe"_
_*"A pretty boy"* _ said Michal. Petting Dudi's hair.
I stepped up into the cart and sat near Stasia with Marina on my lap, Dudi on one of the steps and like this overlouded, with a lot of noise we went to "the house".
Michal thought it more prudent to keep the cart inside the fence and lock the porch and said:
*" The war is over, but there is no government, and a big disorder and all care is necessary."*_
"I am so happy to see you. For two days were alone, closed in the house, afraid to make any noise, without turning on any light."

I showed them the house we had inherited, the closet full of food, Karl's room, in the same disorder he had left it.

"Everything happened so quickly, even without any explication that I left just like it was." I explained.

Everybody, including my small Marina, were enchanted with the house. I made a good cafe and we all sat at the table.
" You were lucky'- said Michal- your German was a good person. There were cases in the same small city, were they killed whole families before they left."_
_" I still continue scared to remain here alone with the children. Could not Stasia remain with me?- I asked.

Michal scratched his head and said:
_" It's dangerous with Stasia and without Stasia. In general its dangerous for women to be alone. There are rumors that the Russians don't spare any woman. Stasia must go home, her mother is sick and she would be very worried.
Don't use any light, do not open the door for anybody and tomorrow in the early morning I will be back. Let's go Stasia before it gets dark, from here till home it's a long way."_
"It's true Michal, you are right. Thank you for everything and for having brought Marina. Give my best regards to everybody there."_

After the goodbye hugs, we went with them to the cart, which Michal took out from the yard. We closed the porch and went up to the attic window and watched them depart. After they disappeared from our sight we were still there looking and waving.
The children embraced each other, with an unbelievable tenderness. Marina had quite forgotten Dudi: for her, the

brother, was a new and pleasant companion. But Dudi was very moved and did not stop petting and kissing her.

I had now my two children; I have succeeded in saving them from the Germans claws and despite it, I felt a big sadness and abandonment.

I made quickly a soup for us, worried about the smoke which could be seen from the chimney and betray our presence in the house.
This first night the children slept together in the same bed. I did not light any lamp, not even to arrange Karl's bed and only covered it with colored sheets and my tears printed new designs on them.

Next day, very early in the morning, we were awakened by a gay sound of a music band, ritmic steps and the singing of soldiers.
They were singing in Russian! We ran to the attic window. It was them our saviours! The war was over! All went out of the houses, laughed and embraced: all were celebrating the end of the nazi occupation.
In closed columns, passed hundreds of soldiers. During the winter there were no flowers and the people greeted them with acclamations and presented their liberators with what ever they could. Between the Russian soldiers there were many robust women in uniforms. They were going toward the combat front. For them also the war was not over and the tight columns will certainly not return without failure.

It was still very early when Michal arrived, bringing a chicken for us.

"Stasia could not come"- he said just entering the house, - "because Dona Maria is very sick. As you know we have no news from Jan. Or he is very far away, or something happened to him, if not he would have appeared. There are still many German ambushes, by the ones who did not succeed to run away on time, especially in the forests. We are very worried. Perhaps I return at night to stay with you"_

" Thank you Michal, this is not necessary. Your wife is sick and they might need you there in the house. But do me another favor: ask Stasia to give our address to Eva, she knows who it is. About Jan you don't need to worry. Bad news arrives flying, if there are no news means that he is fine. Tell Dona Maria that as soon I will be able to I will pay her a visit. For the moment I am afraid to go out of the house."

_ I think"_ said Michal, before he left_" that now, with this situation it is safer that you do appear at the door and the people should know that the house is occupied, so, nobody will try to invade it"_

" You are right Michal, thank you very much for the chicken, for your friendship, for everything you did for us."_

I embraced him and he went. Again we were alone, remnants of a once happy family.

Despite everything and the sadness I felt, I decided to celebrate the occasion and put the chicken into the oven,and bake the for so long dreamed Dudi's fried chicken. I seasoned it well, fried it slowly, till it got brown and juicy.

The children walked around, pulling their small noses and saying:

"what a nice smell ,Mami, will it take long to be ready?"

I arranged a nice table, with nice dishes, forks, knives and spoons and glasses. After all, after such a long time, we were going to eat alone, as a family.

I sent the children to wash their hands and when they returned with clean hands, the beautiful fried chicken was steaming in the middle of the table. It's nice smell could be felt all over the house.

_" Oba!" _ exclaimed Marina and both set down.

I cut a piece for Marina and a bigger one for Dudi, but… Dudi was not eating… he looked at the fourth empty chair and from his eyes, copious tears ran and wet the beautiful fried chicken.

For the cover of the book - by Bella Herson

This is a real story, told by Tamara (fictitious name)to the writer during their trip they made together to Brazil, on the ship Campana, on February 1947.

Between other problems, Tamara spoke about the difficulties she had to pass through, in order to get the Brazilian visas as a Jewes for her and her children. She had to convert to Greco Catholicism in Paris and so she got the Brazilian visa for imigration. For this reason, she and her children never returned to Judaism, for fear to suffer again discrimination.

The writer of this book knew only some years later that Tamara died of lung tuberculosis and that her two children live somewhere in the interior of Brazil on fictitious and unknown names.

There are many people in Brazil who came after the war and never returned to Judaism, for fear of discrimination, or because they got used to living in their new religion, or believing that the new fictitious religion helped them survive the war and for superstition they do not abandon it.

The book is bringing an original story of survival of the war in Poland, by a yong Jewish woman and two children, full of dangers and difficulties. It's a moving true story full of incredible situations of a survival and the scars it has left.

The readers of the book will judge if Tamara survived by power of destiny or courage.

Being very much absorved with this story I wrote it in first person, like if I would be the protagonist of the book.